

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to present petitions on behalf of citizens throughout my area of the Humboldt constituency who are eager to receive improved cellular telephone coverage. 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 provide reliable cellular telephone service in the districts of Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, and Cudworth.

And the signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Prud'homme, Vonda, and Cudworth.

I so present.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today to retain 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people that have signed this petition are from Lockwood and Lanigan.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned, as many in the province are, about the future of 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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition come from the communities of Lanigan, Drake, Jansen, and Leroy.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have people of Saskatchewan concerned about the future of health care. 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, Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from Lanigan, Viscount, Drake, and Guernsey.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned about the future 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 the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

And this is signed by folks from Lanigan, Jansen, and Guernsey.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of people in Swift Current and area concerned about the high price of fuel. The prayer reads:

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

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

This petition is signed by people from Swift Current and another from Regina.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to bring a petition on behalf of people who are very concerned about the health care in this province. And the petition 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 signed by citizens from Strasbourg, Lanigan, and Drake.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present with people concerned about the future of health care in Saskatchewan. 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 communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are Lanigan and Jansen.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present regarding health care in this province. 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.

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

This petition is signed from people in the Lanigan area.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about closures of rural 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.

Signed by the people from Lanigan and Guernsey.

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.

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

Petitioners are from Vanscoy, Kerrobert, Elbow, Davidson, Hawarden, and Kenaston.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with citizens concerned about hospital closures. 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 concerned petitioners are from the communities of Lanigan and Guernsey, and there's one petitioner from Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition concerning 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 the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

Concerned citizens from Lanigan, Drake, and Viscount.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens. It deals with concerns of dealing with possible confiscation of municipal reserve accounts. The prayer reads as follows:

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

And the petitioners come from the communities of Dysart, Lipton, Fort Qu'Appelle, Cupar, Leross, and several other Saskatchewan communities.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition regarding the closure of 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 signatures on this petition come from Jansen, Drake, Guernsey, and Lanigan.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of citizens concerned with forced municipal amalgamation, and the prayer reads as follows:

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

And the petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Chaplin and Morse.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great responsibility I rise to present a petition to retain Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. Their 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 Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Lanigan and Drake.

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.

These are petitions of citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on a number of matters including:

To ensure that the Cupar Health Centre and the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open;

To halt the amalgamation of municipalities;

To reduce fuel taxes; and

To not confiscate municipal reserve accounts.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 58 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Social Services: how many Saskatchewan farmers have been granted monies through the employment supplement program since this program began?

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day. no. 58 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: what was the cost to the government for each of the Saskatchewan residents treated for nephrotic syndrome outside of the province in 1999, year 2000; and what was the reason each of these cases were treated outside of Saskatchewan?

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 58 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Economic Development: how many provincial government regulations were in place when the government made a promise to reduce regulations by 25 per cent over 10 years; how many regulations have been eliminated since then; and how many regulations have been added?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery seated today are 15, approximately, former members of the Legislative Assembly. I will not give them introduction by name in the interests of time.

But I should say, Mr. Speaker, that it has been my practice over the last several years to invite former members of the

Legislative Assembly who have served in the government side to exchange views and ideas and discuss the current events of the day. This is the day in which we have some of the alumnus from 1991 seated in your gallery.

I would ask all members to welcome former colleagues to this House; and I want to thank them for taking the time off to come and to meet with me. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming the NDP (New Democratic Party) alumni here to the Assembly this afternoon. Some of the members, as you know, Mr. Speaker, have served very well the people of Saskatchewan for a good length of time.

Some were members for one term and in addition to that I think there are perhaps seven ministers, maybe more, that had served the people of Saskatchewan, and a number of other members. I noticed one of the members from Lloydminster who I understand in your party has been charged with the process of renewal. It looks like it still needs a little work, Mr. Premier, given the alumni up there this afternoon.

And I couldn't help but notice you look very longingly at the group up there this afternoon. And considering the fact that they . . . considering the fact that you have the B team on the floor and the A team in the gallery, I can see why.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to all members of the Assembly and certainly the members in the gallery that I count many of them as my . . . as close friends . . . close friends . . . close colleagues at least, Mr. Speaker, and I would want to welcome and join with the Premier in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, 47 grade 4 students from St. Josephat School in my constituency of Regina Sherwood, Mr. Speaker.

They're accompanied by their teachers, Elaine Pack and RoseMarie Gauthier, and a chaperon, Mrs. Gusway, who is with us. I will . . . they're here to watch the proceedings this afternoon, at which point they'll be taking a tour. And I look forward to meeting with them at about 2:30 after question period to handle questions from them which I hope are equally . . . which may be even tougher than the questions we get from across the way.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming my students from St Josephat.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members of the House, seated in your west gallery 24 grade 4 students from the Ruth Pawson School in my constituency.

They're accompanied here today by their teacher, Mrs. Malley, and assistant, Mrs. Killback, and 9 chaperones. And I understand that I'll be meeting with them after question period, and I think a uniqueness for them to have the opportunity to tour a minister's office, the Minister of Labour, which she'll join us there for a few minutes.

So I ask all of my colleagues to welcome the students.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Rafferty Dam

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to inform all members about the Rafferty dam in the southeast corner of the province. Skeptics said this dam would never be more than a huge mud hole. Skeptics include one of the members opposite — the Deputy Premier.

We now know that the Rafferty dam has been full and is now almost full. And I would challenge the Deputy Premier to walk across it as he has committed to doing. We also know that he has the snorkelling equipment to accomplish this as he was presented with this equipment in the House by Grant Devine a number of years ago.

I would welcome the opportunity to witness this event should the Deputy Premier see fit to accept my challenge. Grant Devine had the vision to build Rafferty and Alameda. Do you have the right stuff to admit that he was right?

Come on down to Rafferty and take your dunking. I invite everyone to come boating and fishing at the Rafferty reservoir. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Economy Reaches \$1 Trillion

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I normally stand to speak about the great people in the constituency of North Battleford, but I think that might be creating a bit of jealousy opposite so today I'm going to give everyone a break.

I rise to congratulate the entire country. As economist, Andrew Spence put it — Canada has reached the Holy Grail.

Last Thursday Statistics Canada reported that our gross domestic product exceeded \$1 trillion for the first time. That means that the value of all goods and services produced in Canada is now over \$1 trillion.

Canada is booming. We now have the 11th largest economy in the world. We outperformed the US (United States) in each of the last two years and have kept pace for the last four. In 1999, our economy expanded by 4.5 per cent making this country's the fastest growing economy among the G-7 nations.

Economists have attributed our recent good fortune to continuing export demands and strong growth in the domestic economy.

Mr. Speaker, we too often dwell on the negatives and ignore our successes. The fact is Canada is on a roll. This country works. I ask all members to take a moment to recognize the accomplishments of their former Canadians under the capable leadership of the federal Liberal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Residents Receive Recognition

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend *Southwest Booster* newspaper once again highlighted the accomplishments of a number of my constituents that I am honoured to draw the Assembly's attention to this afternoon.

Students Against Drinking and Driving have recently presented Stacy Rabik of Swift Current with one of two provincial builder awards. Stacy first got involved in SADD (Students Against Drinking and Driving) at the comp high school and continued her involvement in her university career.

Recognition is also in order for Swift Current Comprehensive High School student Ryan Medforth who's just been confirmed as an understudy for the very important 2000 anniversary tour of Saskatchewan Express.

And, Mr. Speaker, on Friday of last week, the WHL (Western Hockey League) confirmed what we in Swift Current have known for a long time — by naming Todd McLellan as the league's Coach of the Year. Bryce Wandler, the Bronco goaltender also received the Del Wilson Trophy for the top netminder in the WHL.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Ben Wiebe, a partner with Stark & Marsh Chartered Accountants in Swift Current. Last week the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan awarded Mr. Wiebe with the high honour of the Distinguished Community Service Award. The award recognizes Ben's selfless dedication to minor hockey in Swift Current and the integral role he has played in insuring that Swift Current remains a strong and healthy WHL franchise city — the smallest such city on the continent, Mr. Speaker.

Congratulations to Ben and all of the Swift Current and area people who continue to demonstrate that the best resource of Swift Current and area are our people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Best Wishes for the Saskatchewan Roughriders

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, June is here and the Saskatchewan crops are seeded, the children are anxious for the end of school, and the most unique summer sign of all, Mr. Speaker, is that the Roughriders are yet to lose a single game this season.

For all of those of us who bleed green, and that includes just about everybody in this Assembly I'm sure, hope springs eternal. We are certain that this year will be better than the last five. It's a proven historical fact that the phrase "next year country" was invented for Saskatchewan farmers and the Saskatchewan Roughriders.

Seriously, Mr. Speaker, as the Roughriders prepare to open their camp this coming Sunday, we wish them all a very successful season, both on the field and off. Because they are a professional team, a team which defies the odds year after year by surviving in a league where other teams in much larger centres don't, we believe that the Roughriders are an integral part of our community.

Mr. Speaker, because cheering for a contender is a luxury we haven't had lately, we hope that the Roughriders do very much better this year, and we know that they will.

Mainly, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Roughriders because we want them to do well, because the team is a part of our community, and a vital part at that. We take care of our team, they take care of our kids, they are models for our children.

And I'm sure all members join with me in wishing the Riders the very, very best in the season to come.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Guy Kerbrat Wins Prime Minister's Award

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Prime Minister of Canada presented the Prime Minister's Award to Mr. Guy Kerbrat for advances in technological literacy. Guy is a teacher at the Rouleau School in Rouleau, Saskatchewan where he carries a heavy workload in the school teaching computer-related subjects, as well as French, mathematics and phys ed.

Guy was nominated for the Prime Minister's Award by his colleagues and his much respected presence in the classroom, and in the school as a teacher and a coach, and in the Rouleau community.

Guy has the ability to write computer programs quickly and tailor them towards problem solving for his students in the math and French subject areas.

One of his notable achievements includes the Fast Track program which is used throughout Saskatchewan and in other provinces to speed up the recording process at track meets. He is the only teacher in Saskatchewan this year to receive this prestigious award for his efforts.

He received a pin, a certificate signed by the Prime Minister, and \$1,000 which he has designated towards volleyball equipment at the Rouleau School.

I'm sure all members of this Assembly will congratulate you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Official Opening of Westview School

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, this morning was a very happy morning for the children and their families of the West Flat community located in my constituency, Prince Albert Northcote. This morning I was very pleased to attend, along with the Premier and the

member from Prince Albert Carleton, the official opening of the Westview School.

Originally a satellite school with Queen Mary, Westview is officially designated as a new community school. These schools play a very important role in Prince Albert. They provide not only a solid academic education to the students but they act as a focal point for our community, the place for both students and their families to gather, a place to get a good start in order that these children have the opportunity to reach their goals in life.

This school will hold over a hundred West Flat children from kindergarten to grade 4. It also is the house of the police liaison program, an office and a computer and teaching materials for Constable Brenda McGregor who will be made available by the Saskatchewan Rivers School Division.

I would like to congratulate the staff and the students for all their hard work in putting together a wonderful opening ceremony. I would also like to wish them the best as Westview School becomes an integral part of the West Flat community in Prince Albert and provides for an education for the future leaders of Prince Albert and of Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Community of Lampman Pays Off Swimming Pool

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the members opposite like to bring good news to the legislature. So do I. The people of Lampman paid off their swimming pool this weekend. They did this through their own efforts with no help from the government. They did this with a supper, an auction, and a sports day.

People of the area donated services and supplies. One family donated five live chickens, and the lucky purchaser paid \$650 but he only wanted one chicken. The remaining four were sold for \$500. So that's \$1,150 for this farm produce.

But as every farmer knows, as farm produce goes up in price, so do farm inputs, particularly the heavy iron such as tractors and combines. They had two toy tractors donated for this sale. The winning bidder paid \$1,200 and got his choice of either the John Deere or the Case. I'm not going to enter the argument of which one was chosen.

But again, this clearly shows that the price of heavy iron is always more than the value of the farm produce.

Overall the community raised \$44,000 and completely paid for their swimming pool debt. Congratulations to the community of Lampman.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Maintenance of Highway 4

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. If you want something done right, do it yourself. I guess that's what the people of Val Marie are thinking. They are sick and tired of

waiting for the government to fix the potholes on Highway 4, so they've decided to do it themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I think that speaks volumes about the NDP's neglect of highways in this province when citizens have to get together and start fixing the highways themselves.

To the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, the people of Val Marie pay taxes like everyone else. They pay income taxes, they pay gas tax, they pay your expanded PST (provincial sales tax). And it's not like you're spending the money on health care in that part of the province.

Mr. Minister, given all the taxes the people of Val Marie pay, why do they have to fix their own highway?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I've instructed my deputy to contact the mayor of Val Marie. He has done so, and in fact as we speak he's on his way down to Val Marie to meet with the mayor to discuss this problem.

I certainly, Mr. Speaker, understand the concerns of the community. We too are concerned about the safety of the public.

And I find it though passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that day after day, day after day, and even today we hear and receive petitions from the members opposite asking us to reduce the price of gas tax and at the same time repair our roads in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I would ask them to make some sense in their arguments and assist us in trying to get federal dollars for the maintenance of roads.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well perhaps the minister will tell us and the people of Val Marie that he's collecting the money but not spending it on the highways.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting. The people of Val Marie may actually be breaking the law in going out and fixing their own highway. I think that says a lot about the people of Saskatchewan. In other places, people commit civil disobedience by vandalizing government property. In Saskatchewan they commit civil disobedience by fixing government property.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — It's the NDP government that has been vandalizing the roads through nine years of neglect.

Mr. Minister, the mayor of Val Marie acknowledges that they may actually be breaking the law by taking the government's coal patch and gravel to fix the highway. I hope the Premier isn't planning on using any pepper spray down there.

Mr. Minister, since you are not going to do anything to fix this highway, will you allow the people of Val Marie to use your material to fix their highway?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, he talks about us and the tax that we've collected for repairing roads. Mr. Speaker, for four years they didn't even collect tax — and that's why we have the debt that we have today, Mr. Speaker, and that's why there isn't enough money for roads.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote if I can, if I can, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to quote from an article out of *The Leader-Post* on April 15, 2000. And the quote is as follows:

However, there is only so much construction the province can complete each year as long as the federal government refuses to contribute its share of twinning costs, Elhard said.

Mr. Speaker, even the opposition acknowledges, and I note, Mr. Speaker, even the opposition acknowledges that there should be assistance from the federal government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nine years in government and they still can't take any responsibility and they still don't fix the roads.

Mr. Speaker, I think the government is missing a tourism opportunity here. In the Okanagan Valley they allow tourists to pick fruit, maybe the NDP should get tourists to patch their own stretch of highway.

Mr. Minister, the people of Val Marie should be commended for taking this initiative but you should be embarrassed for having let it get this bad.

For nine years your government has allowed Saskatchewan highways to fall apart to the point that many are unsafe to travel. You can't drive a school bus down No. 18. You can't haul food or produce down No. 4 because it gets bruised.

Why did you allow this to happen? Why did you allow Saskatchewan highways to fall apart?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, we're extremely concerned about public safety. That's why we have the highest budget in Saskatchewan's history at \$250 million this year, Mr. Speaker — an increase of 6.6 per cent over last year.

We acknowledge that's not enough. And that's why we've called on the federal government to assist us with road repairs as well, pumping more money into Saskatchewan's economy. And that's why I find it passing strange, Mr. Speaker, that day after day the opposition stands in the House with petitions asking us to do more and at the same time reduce the gas tax on fuel. It makes absolutely no sense, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally this government has matched the commitment they made four years

ago. But unfortunately while the budget has increased, the amount of money going into road construction has decreased.

Mr. Minister, I'm going out to Shaunavon tonight to the first Saskatchewan Party nomination meeting. I'm going to stay overnight and go to Val Marie at 8 a.m. in the morning to help with the patching.

Some of my colleagues think I'm taking a bit of a risk doing that kind of heavy shovelling that far from a decent health care facility. But I think I'm up to it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, I'd like you to join me. It would be far more productive than the kind of shovelling you've been doing in here this afternoon.

Mr. Minister, why don't you come out and get a first-hand look at one of the highways that you have helped destroy? Will you come out to Val Marie in the morning and help the people fix the highway?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, I've instructed my deputy minister to communicate with the community and with the mayor of Val Marie. He's done that and he's on his way down to discuss with him to see what can be done right now.

Mr. Speaker, I want to point out that at the level of debt that these opposition members racked up — \$2 million a day interest is accumulated, Mr. Speaker — can you imagine how many Highway No. 4's could be repaired each and every day with that amount of interest that those folks racked up, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Personal Income Tax Rates

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today my question is for the Minister of Finance. Just over two months ago, the Finance minister stood in this House and he read his much heralded budget speech. He went on and on about the changes he was making to personal income tax.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, he went so far as to say, and I quote: "... 70 per cent of (all) Saskatchewan taxpayers will pay income tax at a rate equal to residents of Alberta."

Just two weeks ago, Mr. Speaker, Alberta passed Bill 18 which allowed greater exemptions at a lower single tax rate for their residents. So now, Mr. Minister, no one in Saskatchewan will pay income tax at a rate equal to residents of Alberta — all taxpayers will pay more.

Mr. Minister, my question. Will you live up to your budget speech commitment? Will you reduce personal income tax levels in Saskatchewan so that people here will pay no more than their Alberta neighbours?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well here we go again, Mr. Speaker, with the Leader of the Opposition getting up and telling people in this House and the people of the province we should cut taxes

on one hand, more than we are, and spend more, Mr. Speaker. And you know what? It doesn't add up.

But what I want to say the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, is that in the last budget delivered in this House a few months ago, as the member said, we proposed, Mr. Speaker, that we will lower personal income tax. We will cut the flat tax in half on July 1 — less than a month away. And do you know what the Leader of the Opposition said to that, Mr. Speaker? He said no.

And then we said we're going to eliminate the flat tax and the high income surtax and the debt reduction surtax on January 1 — that's half a year away — and you know what he said to that, Mr. Speaker? He said no.

And today the Leader of the Opposition gets up and says he's in favour of tax cuts. Mr. Speaker, it didn't add up in the 1980s and it doesn't add up today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has a short memory. Didn't he say that we were going to have the taxes on par with Alberta? Isn't that what he said? Didn't he say that 70 per cent of Saskatchewan people would be paying the same income tax rate as Albertans? Is that what he said? Yes, he did.

Well what he's doing is he's bringing in a three-tier income tax rate ranging from 11 to 15 per cent.

But in one fell swoop, Alberta set a single rate of ten and a half per cent taxable income for everybody; 190,000 people won't pay any income tax at all. The basic and spousal exemptions were both increased to \$12,900, almost \$5,000 more than here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, Saskatchewan residents are tired of seeing more and more of their paycheque disappear into the black hole of government taxation. My question: will you go back to the drawing board and give Saskatchewan people the serious tax break that they deserve?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has since this legislature opened, along with his colleagues, got up in this House and promised the people of Saskatchewan \$1.2 billion in new spending. New, Mr. Speaker — that's what he says.

And now he says, Mr. Speaker, he's going to cut taxes more than we're cutting taxes, which is a \$260 million tax cut in the recent budget. And the question really is, Mr. Speaker, does anybody find that believable? I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is we're taking 55,000 people off of the income tax rolls as a result of the recent budget. We're cutting the flat tax, the most regressive tax we had, brought in by Grant Devine when he was premier with the support of those members over there; we're cutting the flat tax in half on July 1. We're eliminating the flat tax, Mr. Speaker,

on January 1. We're eliminating the high-income surtax and we're eliminating the debt-reduction surtax and taxes in Saskatchewan are only going in one direction, Mr. Speaker, and that is down.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the Minister of Finance would have to admit that a year ago he was sitting on a small slush fund called the liquor and gaming fund, of a couple hundred million dollars. Suddenly that ballooned to \$700 million and he doesn't seem to think that that plays a part in tax reduction for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, while they were offering some limited income tax relief in one hand, then they picked our pocket with a massive expansion of PST on the other hand. Mr. Speaker, people wouldn't even mind paying these taxes in the province if they felt they were getting something for it. But now they've had to even resort to fixing their own roads. They've seen at least \$10 million on the botched potato venture. They're just sick and tired of NDP talk with no action.

Mr. Minister, will you just live up to your own budget speech, your own words. Give the people of Saskatchewan some meaningful tax reduction. Will you at least keep your promise and put 70 per cent of Saskatchewan residents on the same tax . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm very . . . it's very interesting that the Leader of the Opposition would be critical of the tax cuts, which he's finally acknowledged in this House today, that we brought in in the budget because, Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, we're going to be cutting income taxes in Saskatchewan by a net of \$260 million. We're cutting income taxes all together by about one-third, Mr. Speaker, and it's . . .

I'd like to say to the House, Mr. Speaker, that that exceeds what the Leader of the Opposition promised in the last general election because what he promised, Mr. Speaker, and I'll remind him, was a 20 per cent income tax cut. That was the platform of the Saskatchewan Party. But you know who that was going to go to, Mr. Speaker? That was going to go to the rich.

And the difference between us on this side of the House and them on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is we're going to cut the flat tax and eliminate the flat tax which is a regressive tax and not reward a bunch of rich friends as the Leader of the Opposition wants to, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Impact of Expanded Provincial Sales Tax in Lloydminster

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Finance. Mr. Minister, the Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce just recently sent you a letter, as you well know, on May 16 and they were expressing their very

grave concerns about the expanded provincial sales tax.

I noticed in part of their logo letterhead that they use the words, make a break for the border. This letter goes on to say that the implication of this increased tax tipped the scales of competition in favour of businesses and development within the city but on the Alberta side. Why would any one set up business and develop property on the Saskatchewan side when everything is much, much cheaper on the . . . just a few blocks away?

The letter states and I quote, Mr. Minister:

The life and death of Saskatchewan-based businesses in Lloydminster is in your hands . . .

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

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I will. What is your response to these concerns, Mr. Minister, expressed by the Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, as the member from Lloydminster knows, because he's discussed this with me personally on more than one occasion, I have agreed to go to Lloydminster and meet with representatives of the city of Lloydminster and the chamber of commerce. And the member from Lloydminster knows, as he's asked me to do, Mr. Speaker, that I intend to meet with the people up there personally.

So when he says what is my response? He's already asked me to meet with them; I've said I would. And I'm not going to give my response before I meet with them as I've agreed to do at his request, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the response, and in fact we have been consulting. But I wanted to bring another example to the, to the attention of the minister.

The retail sector has taken a large hit, of course, in Saskatchewan's side because of this PST. Lloydminster city hall as a matter of fact is moving to its new home located now on the Alberta side of the border because the tax savings dictated that it be located there.

Mr. Minister, the Lloydminster Chamber of Commerce, as you know, asked for a consideration for this expanded PST in light of this problem. Now will you do that?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well you know, Mr. Speaker, I have a lot of respect for the member from Lloydminster. But first he gets up and he asks me a question about what my response is to some individuals in Lloydminster when we've already agreed I'm going to meet with them personally.

Then he gets up and talks about the PST in the city of Lloydminster when, Mr. Speaker, the PST in retail isn't charged in the city of Lloydminster.

So I don't know how to make sense of the questions from the member from Lloydminster other than to say I've said I'm going to meet with the individuals from Lloydminster — that's what I'm going to do — and I'm sure they'll have some sensible questions to ask, unlike the questions the member from Lloydminster is presently asking. And I'll be pleased to sit down and have a very sensible and civil discussion with them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The PST of course, is exempt in Lloydminster for personal use, but not for commercial properties or commercial expansion.

One other example that I think should be brought to the attention, and this is one of the Saskatchewan flagship stores in Lloydminster, and represented throughout the province, and that is the Co-op store. Well in Lloydminster, Mr. Minister, even the Co-op now is considering moving to the Alberta side of the border.

Mr. Minister, it seems like business after business is moving to that side. What more do you need to convince that this progressive tax change to stimulate the Saskatchewan economy is needed in all of these border communities like Lloydminster?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I've already indicated to the member from Lloydminster that I'm going to be discussing with people in Lloydminster the issues he raises. And I can't add anything to that, other than the member from Lloydminster apparently thinks everything in Saskatchewan should be the same as it is in Alberta.

And I'll just say this to the member from Lloydminster in the House. One thing we're not going to emulate in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to privatize health care. That's what we're not going to do, Mr. Speaker. And I'm sure there are people on the Alberta side that think Bill 11 and the privatization of medicare is a good idea too, Mr. Speaker.

But you know it was just reported, Mr. Speaker that the leading cause of personal bankruptcy in the United States is health care costs, Mr. Speaker. And if we go down the road they're talking about in Alberta, that's where we'll end up too.

And I want to say to the member from Lloydminster, Alberta is a very fine place, but we shouldn't try to emulate everything they do, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Review of Personal Injury Protection Plan

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Last day the minister wouldn't answer any questions — that was Friday — about SaskEnergy or their plans for a plush new office.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. He didn't want to

talk about SaskEnergy; he had only one answer ready and that was about no-fault insurance. So today I'll be delighted to go ahead and pose a few questions to that minister about no-fault. Hopefully he'll be ready for it.

The minister introduced his new review chairman on Friday, and within minutes said the mandate for his committee was only relatively open. When he was asked what was meant by relatively open, Mr. Speaker, he told the media he couldn't comment. Then he called the media later and gave several different answers as to why he used the word relatively. One can only guess — this may be another socialist version of the operative word.

Mr. Minister, can you really tell the public today: is this mandate of this review committee fully open to study all angles or isn't it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, once again I'm disappointed because today I was ready to talk about SaskEnergy and their building but we'll save that for another day.

This particular committee is up and ready to go. And, as has been said last year and has been said this year on many occasions, the mandate is open. They're going to look at the legislation; they're going to compare what we had before with what we have now; they're going to look at what's done in other provinces and other states and other countries and make sure that we have the best system that there is in this country.

And so we want to know that we will have all of these people working well together. I encourage that member to finally pick up the telephone, call the committee, give them your ideas, encourage all of your friends to do that. We know that all of your friends at the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities have already done that. Why don't you join them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister said he'd like to answer a question about SaskEnergy and their building. Just the other day he told us they didn't have a building; they were looking for something. So he's probably hiding something else. But we'll get at that one tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, comments by your chairman on Friday have done nothing to help your review. One minute the chairman is saying he wants them — the victims of no-fault and the Law Society — to come back to the table.

The next minute he says the mandate of the committee is only relatively open. He described his use of the word relative as meaning, Mr. Speaker, relative compared to other social democratic societies. I guess like Cuba. So being relatively open, Mr. Speaker, you're only slightly more open than Cuba in this review.

Members of the victims' coalition against no-fault, Mr. Speaker, have no more faith in this process than they did before your new committee was unveiled. Mr. Minister, why would

you not at least consider their advice and seek their input to ensure that all parties would be comfortable in your new committee?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, all people in Saskatchewan are very welcome to provide their advice, their information for this review. And that has been a consistent point; we've been there.

We encourage that member opposite, all of his friends, anybody else to make sure that they get their information into this review so that we can have a full review, a wide-open review, just as the Chair said.

We encourage that you, the member opposite, sit down with your members, put together maybe a three-page brief — it could be even one of your questions because they're so long. But go ahead and make sure you get your information into this committee, because we want all information so that the review can be done properly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I've attended every single one of the meetings that his committee has held so far. I have attended none.

Also I've attended every single committee meeting that's been held by the victims of no-fault and he has been at none of those particular meetings.

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Mr. Heppner: — Hopefully at the next set of meetings that's held by the victims of no-fault, he'll show up at least one of those.

Mr. Speaker, when you introduced the members of your newly expanded no-fault review committee, you said it would be done within the same budget, which was originally approximately three-quarters of a million dollars. At this point, you've spent about \$80,000 and you haven't held a meeting.

So I'd like to know how this is going to work. You have a committee that now consists of eight members and they are starting over from brand new. They haven't done anything yet. How will they be expected to do the same wide-ranging review that the original five were supposed to do — would they now have a budget of under \$700,000?

Mr. Minister, is it true that the committee will be limited in the number of public consultation meetings it will hold throughout the province, given the trouble you had getting the process underway?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is no. They are going to go ahead and do the work that they need to do. Now what I encourage that member to do — and I think you should get your leader to sit down with you — is set up your position on this whole thing and get it into the committee.

Tell us where you stand so that they can use the information that you've got to provide for them. It's very curious to listen to the information that's there, because we know that some of their

...

The Speaker: — Hon. Minister of CIC to complete your answer.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, our object in working with the personal injury protection plan is to create the best automobile insurance plan in Canada, in North America, and in the world.

The only way we can do that is if we work with the people of Saskatchewan to get all of the information so that we can continue to develop and set up a system that will provide all of the things that are needed for our Saskatchewan people. We're going to do that in the best way that we can.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of our open and accountable government we are very, very happy to table the answer to question 155.

The Speaker: — Question to no. 155 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, on behalf of the government being both very open and accountable, we'd like to table the answer to question no. 156.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 156 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'd like to stand up on behalf of the government and table the answer to question no. 157. Being open and accountable, we definitely like to give them the answer, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 157 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, I'd like to stand up on behalf of the government and table the answer to question 158. Being open and accountable, we have an answer for them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 158 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, on behalf of this government, which has been both open and accountable in all its questions, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to table the answer to no. 159.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 159 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to once again stand up and answer question no. 160 and table it with this Assembly. Continuing in our practice of being open and accountable, we have the answer. It's very detailed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 160 is tabled.

Order. I would ask the Hon. Leader of the Opposition and the member from Regina South to kindly curtail their debate until the appropriate time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 74 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to describe for all members the amendments contained in Bill No. 74, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000.

The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act sets out the statutory basis for the powers of the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority in regulating the distribution and consumption of beverage alcohol. The amendments will clarify and streamline certain provisions of the Act dealing with permits to sell beverage alcohol.

Specifically they deal with extensions to liquor permits known as endorsements which allow the sale of beer and wine for consumption off premises, commonly known as off-sale. Amendments in this Bill will also clarify the processes followed by the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission, the independent body that hears appeals of decisions made by the Authority.

These legislative amendments have been prompted by this government's decision to implement the recommendations made as part of the independent review of the off-sale and brew pub industries in our four largest cities. Conducted by a Regina lawyer, Myron Gulka-Tiechko, in 1999, this review examined the regulations, the policies, and procedures related to granting endorsements for the off-sale of beer and wine in hotels and brew pubs, and made recommendations to modernize, streamline, and simplify the process. Mr. Gulka-Tiechko conducted extensive consultations with representatives of the hospitality industry as part of this review.

Presently hotels with a tavern permit or a brew pub are eligible to obtain off-sale endorsements. However, the granting of an off-sale endorsement is limited by a population restriction as well as a distance criteria or restriction. Mr. Speaker, concerns with the current off-sale system were the impetus for this review.

The current system limits the number of the off-sale endorsements granted in Regina, Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and Moose Jaw. The limited number of endorsements has led to intense competition, and costly, unproductive, and ongoing legal challenges in both the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission and the courts.

This same situation does not exist in smaller urban centres or in rural Saskatchewan; consequently the amendments will apply only to the province's four largest cities. The problems are summarized by Mr. Gulka-Tiechko in his report when he says

and I quote:

Over the past decade, there has been no single liquor licensing issue to ignite as much controversy as the off-sale endorsement.

The . . . regulatory regime which evolved (for off-sale endorsements) . . . has proven to be frustrating to new applicants, some existing permittees, Authority staff and the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission.

Because of the limitations placed on numbers of outlets allowed, competitors in particular have used the system both to protect their own existing off-sale privileges and to block expansion by others. The result has been a considerable increase in Licensing Commission hearings, often prompted by objections from competitors, followed by Court challenges to both the Court of Queen's Bench, and the Saskatchewan Court of Appeal.

Those critical of the system see it as unpredictable (one) with respect to outcomes and unsustainable in the long run.

They see regulatory tools being used for the purpose of economic rationing rather than enforcing existing social responsibilities.

To address this situation, Mr. Speaker, the review recommended removing the population and distance requirements that currently limit the number of off-sale endorsements in the four largest cities, and implementing criteria for brew pubs to ensure that only brew pubs viable in their own right are eligible for off sale. These restrictions are found in regulations.

The review also recommended clarifying and streamlining the powers of the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission in hearing appeals found in the Act. These changes will simplify the rules governing involvement in the off-sale industry. They will create a level playing field for the hotel and brew pub taverns that off-sale beer, allowing market demand to determine the number of off-sale outlets in our largest urban centres.

(1430)

They also ensure the authority maintains its regulatory role of protecting the public by enforcing age restrictions and promoting the socially responsible distribution and use of beverage alcohol.

Mr. Speaker, most of the review recommendations will be dealt with through changes to regulations. However certain important changes need to be made to the legislation through this Bill to ensure a solid framework for implementation of the review's recommendations.

The most significant are the changes to the powers and processes of the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission. Under the current process for commission hearings, applicants seeking a liquor permit or off-sale endorsement are required to advertise their intentions in the newspaper, and any member of the public is allowed to file an objection to the granting of the permit or the endorsement.

The commission is required to deal with each objection filed by conducting a mandatory hearing process. This requirement for mandatory hearings has often proven to be unproductive and costly. It has delayed decisions regarding the granting of off-sale endorsements at significant expense to all parties — the people applying for endorsements, individuals filing objections, and the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

This Bill will give the commission the discretion to determine whether a hearing is required when an objection is found to be frivolous or vexatious. This responds directly to the recommendation in the Myron Gulka-Tiechko report. These recommendations will complement changes to regulations intended to support this recommendation.

The elimination of mandatory hearings will reduce delays in the application process in turn reducing costs and frustrations for all parties. At the same time it will ensure the resources of the commission are available to perform its role of protecting the public interest in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, many of the remaining amendments contained in this Bill provide a solid foundation for the recommended changes to the regulatory regime governing off-sale by clarifying and streamlining the legislative basis upon which endorsements are granted.

First of all, this Bill will define the term, endorsement; an endorsement is an addition or extension to a liquor permit which provides an additional privilege with respect to the sale of liquor. For an example, an endorsement is granted . . . is used to grant a hotel or a liquor permit an additional privilege such as selling beer off-sale.

Endorsement is not a new concept. Endorsements are currently granted under regulation. However, the current Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act only refers to permits. The amendments in this Bill simply bring the term endorsement officially within the scope of the Act and clarify the legislative rights and obligations that pertain to endorsements. This change is intended to accord them the same processes currently given to permits.

The legislation also defines the term reviewable endorsement. Creating this subset of the category of endorsement enables different processes to apply to different endorsements, depending upon their specific nature.

A reviewable endorsement will be recognized as an addition to a liquor permit that substantially impacts a liquor establishment or the public. An off-sale endorsement is a prime example. Because of this impact, decisions made by the Liquor and Gaming Authority with respect to these endorsements will be reviewable by the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission.

Regulations will set out which types of endorsements are reviewable endorsements. Examples of non-reviewable endorsements would be room service or catering.

The commission and the courts have already been interpreting our legislation in this way. These changes merely clarify and formalize an already existing framework.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this Bill contains a housekeeping provision unrelated to the issues of endorsement or the powers of the commission. The current legislation refers to outcomes and consequences of authority decisions to suspend or cancel a gaming licence, liquor permit, or certificate of registration granted to a gaming supplier or employee, thereby implying the authority's power in this regard.

An amendment contained in the Bill simply, specifically sets out the authority's power with respect to suspension and cancellation of gaming licences, liquor permits and endorsements, and certificates of registration.

In summary, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with this government's commitment to regulatory reform, the provisions contained in these amendments clarify the statutory basis for the granting of endorsements for liquor permits.

The amendments in this Bill also set the stage for the changes to the liquor regulations related to implementing changes to off-sale restrictions and regulations called for by Mr. Gulka-Tiechko's report.

These changes will result in a clearer set of simpler rules for the businesses who seek and who obtain endorsements related to liquor permits. They will allow the marketplace to determine the appropriate level of activity.

They will also streamline and reduce the workload of the Liquor Licensing Commission and the expense incurred by all parties in relation to objections to the endorsement applications that are frivolous in nature.

Freed of its role as the economic gatekeeper, the Liquor and Gaming Authority will be able to concentrate its efforts, as the report recommends, on using regulatory tools to enforce social responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that Bill No. 74, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000 be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a few comments regarding Bill No. 74. And as I was listening to the minister, it appears that what Bill No. 74 is, it's doing two things. Number one, it's reacting to a study done in regards to liquor . . . or alcohol and gaming regulations. And it's also addressing, as I hear, a number of concerns raised by the industry, especially when it comes to the off-sale and the opportunity to have off-sale available at your establishment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think just from listening to the minister and some of the comments she was making, I can appreciate where — when you get into larger centres with larger population bases, more liquor establishments — where some would feel that they are not being treated as equally if they do not have access to the ability to sell off-sale in their establishment. Whereas the smaller centres, certainly the off-sale is something that is, for smaller communities, something certainly worthwhile for the individuals who would like to have the opportunity to purchase alcoholic products.

But as the minister was commenting, she mentioned the fact that there were a number of issues that have been raised over the past number of years — issues in regards to regulations, and regulations sort of setting the guidelines for some of the . . . the guidelines that establishments would operate under. Some of it was set under legislation; owners were challenging the guidelines at different times where they found themselves in many occasions entering an appeal process.

And if, as the minister indicated, what we're trying to do here is simplify the whole process and establish clear and cut rules and guidelines so everyone knows what the rules are in legislation, I can certainly agree with the minister in that and we can certainly go along with the minister.

But I think we need to take the time to review this somewhat a little more in depth. I think a number of my colleagues have had questions raised as well. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be appropriate for us to just get a clearer understanding of where this Bill is going — Bill No. 74, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000 — before we would proceed even further in the debate in regards to this legislation.

And therefore, Mr. Speaker, at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 75 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2000 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 75, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2) is the French language version of Bill No. 74, which I have just spoken to. It contains the same amendments and the same regulatory provisions and has the same intent. Therefore:

M. le Président, je déplace par ceci cette facture le numéro soixante-dix cinq, l'alcool et la Loi réglementaire 2000 numéro deux d'amendement de jeu, soit maintenant lue une deuxième fois.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move that Bill No. 75, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2000, numéro deux, (No. 2) be now read a second time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I suspected, this piece of legislation just follows up on Bill No. 74. And unfortunately my français is not very good so I'm going to have to bypass that.

But I would have to say until we have a chance to really review Bill No. 74, it would be inappropriate for us to actually allow for passage or the movement of one piece of legislation into committee. And I think if I could add one other point, it would seem that one would have to ask why we need two separate Bills. Why could we not have just taken Bill No. 74 and then brought in the French translation to the same Bill when it's basically dealing with the same information?

But I think it's something we need to look at. Maybe down the road we can get some clarification on that matter as well and simplify the process and just deal with one piece of legislation.

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

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 76 — The Research Council Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased today to move second reading of An Act to amend The Research Council Act, 2000.

The purposes of these amendments are, one, to provide the Research Council with a mandate and the ability to assist in the commercialization of new technology; secondly, to enable the SRC (Saskatchewan Research Council) to obtain the same level of audit services as other similar Crown corporations; and thirdly, to ensure that The Research Council Act coincides with The Tabling of Documents Act of 1991.

These are very important to the Research Council. Firstly, because the SRC is an organization that works with leading-edge technologies that must expand and adapt to suit the market demands that arise from these technologies.

When the Research Council was created in 1947, commercializing technology was not an important consideration. This is because research was initially conducted by university professors before the SRC had its own facilities. Over time, the Research Council's focus has moved from mostly government-related research to applied industry contract research with commercial application.

As a result, commercialization has become a more important issue. Now at the beginning of the new century, it is clear that research and development and innovation are only able to make a difference in society when the fruits of these efforts are commercialized and put into practical use.

Today the SRC works very closely with about 1,500 industry clients each year. During the fiscal year 1999-2000, SRC earned about 11 million or 70 per cent of its program revenue from contract work. This accomplishment, Mr. Speaker, has helped the SRC become recognized by its peers as one of the premier applied research and development organizations in Canada.

But the Research Council cannot rest on its laurels. It must be a changing and moving entity. The SRC's customers need technology to solve problems, make improvements, stay ahead of the competition, and develop new markets. The SRC can help its customers be more competitive.

This can be done by taking research results — their own or anyone else's — and through a design, a demonstration, or a pilot plan, or any combination of these, they can turn research into usable technology that can be commercialized for the user's benefit.

With the help of the SRC, a new product, a new process, or a

new system is developed. For example, the Research Council contributed to the development of horizontal well technology. This new technology led directly to a doubling of oil production in Saskatchewan between 1987 and when the first well was drilled; and in 1997 when production topped 140 million barrels, an increase worth well over \$1 billion annually.

Commercialization of horizontal wells has created 4,350 jobs, increased oil production by 36 per cent, and has generated over \$400 million to the province in revenue in the past six years.

The SRC with industry partners has developed other promising oil recovering technologies. The changes to this Act will ensure that the SRC is better able to see these new technologies through to field practice. As well, it will allow our . . . the SRC to receive appropriate return for its contribution.

Energy efficiency is another area where the Research Council is working to make the most of our provinces resources. The building energy management program provides energy audits and information to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and save energy. After this knowledge is put into practice, most buildings in this province have savings from 20 to 30 per cent of their total energy consumption.

The SRC's alternative energy team has developed technology to convert gasoline engines to run on natural gas. This technology is important because it addresses environmental concerns to reduce emissions by using a cleaner burning fuel. Several manufacturers plan to commercialize products developed and tested through this research.

Through a partnership with Canodev Research and Canadian agriculture, the SRC designed and built a computer control system for an instrument used in grain elevators to analyze oilseed content for accurate grading. Partnerships are now being sought for this commercialization of the technology so that more units can be manufactured.

These, Mr. Speaker, are only a few examples of the work and assistance the SRC provides to Saskatchewan, Canadian, and international clients by dedicating itself to bringing investment dollars and technology into Saskatchewan to enhance our quality of life.

The value of the SRC's work and benefits for our province have not been unrecognized. The late Ian Wahn, a lawyer and a Member of Parliament, believed in the Research Council's ability to foster innovation. He believed so much that he created a special \$500,000 fund called Technology in Action.

Mr. Wahn's parents were pioneers in Saskatchewan and he felt it was important to develop the people of Saskatchewan . . . to help the people of Saskatchewan develop this province as a highly skilled, fair, desirable, and compassionate society.

He saw the Research Council as credible, reliable, and an organization that could help achieve these goals by assisting the commercialization of technology and scientific solutions. These commercialization efforts will improve the competitiveness of Saskatchewan enterprises, create new jobs, and help protect the environment especially in rural Saskatchewan.

It is with the same drive and dedication that Mr. Wahn had for Saskatchewan that the Research Council is moving ahead in the area of commercialization of technology. As the SRC's role expands beyond research and development, it requires new tools to help move inventions and ideas to their practical application. This change to The Research Council Act is another step in the road to assisting Saskatchewan residents with their innovations.

Secondly, the Research Council has identified a need to obtain more value-added audit services to complement the Provincial Auditor. Currently the Provincial Auditor provides a regulatory compliance review on an annual basis. This amendment will enable the Research Council to use, in addition to the Provincial Auditor, other auditors with extensive business experience in the areas of analysis of strategic direction, improvement of processes, program value for money, etc.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the third purpose of these amendments is to ensure The Research Council Act, with respect to reporting, is updated to be consistent with The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request that all members of the House endorse these amendments to The Research Council Act, so that the SRC can continue to enhance its role in assisting Saskatchewan in the commercialization of technology and enhancing its audit options in order to meet both regulatory compliance as well as business excellence. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when we talk about research in the province . . . and the minister alluded to some of the technological changes that we have seen take place and the fact that Saskatchewan has such a lot to offer the people not only of this province, but even as a partner in Confederation with the resources that we have.

Certainly whether it's the natural resources — the oil or the coal or even the uranium and other minerals that we're beginning to explore and find within the province of Saskatchewan — Mr. Speaker, when we talk about these resources . . .

And the agricultural sector certainly has expanded in many areas and a lot of that is due to research. Research of the technology that is used in the planting of crops and certainly in the marketing of crops. When you think of, for example, canola, for example, Mr. Speaker, and we look at the research that has taken place in regards to how we use the oil or the product from canola such as the oils, whether it's for human consumption or whether it's for other uses, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we can appreciate what the minister is talking about when he talks about Bill No. 76, The Research Council Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, I think it's important for us to understand how important it is to have research, to research new products, new ideas, new technologies.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about the horizontal drilling and the impact it has had in this province. And certainly it's been an important component in the expansion of the oil sector; whether it's the oil or natural gas, Mr. Speaker, horizontal

drilling has added a new dimension to the enhancement of oil exploration in the province of Saskatchewan. And that exploration, Mr. Speaker, results in a real added boost to the economy of the province of Saskatchewan not only in the finances that are contributed, but as well as job creation and job growth.

Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about environmental issues and some of the research that is going on in that regard. And most recently, Mr. Speaker, we have . . . for the past number of months we've been all reminded of the fact of some of the costs we as individual consumers face just by going to the gas pumps. And we see the prices have been bouncing — they've been up one day and down the next. And one has to begin to wonder if . . . As we continue to hear that we're not going to see lower fuel prices, and one of the arguments companies give for bumping the prices is the added cost that they face, the environmental issues and concerns.

You must begin to wonder with all the technology we have and the research we've done over the years, while the price of fuel may be high, you begin to ask yourselves how come we're still driving vehicles that are only getting the equivalent of the mileage that we were getting say 10, 15 years ago if we've been able to do such good research?

One would think that we should be able to build a more efficient, fuel efficient motor. A motor that would, Mr. Speaker, be environmentally friendly and yet could still consume a lot of the natural resource that we use except in a more efficient manner.

And I guess, Mr. Speaker, that's one of the reasons we need to continue research. And we need to continue to allow the Research Council to do its job. And those are some of the issues that we need to be very cognizant of when we're talking about research.

We need to look at ways in which we can better use and promote the agricultural products that we have in this province. And here again, Mr. Speaker, we have to ask ourselves: will we continue to move the raw product from this province for manufacturing and processing rather than doing more of that in the province? And I guess some of that again comes to the research of finding ways in which we can use or add value to our product and move it out of the province as a more value-added product that actually brings more in, adds more to our economy.

So I think, Mr. Speaker, while this is a good piece of legislation, it's a piece of legislation that needs to be reviewed a little more in-depth so that we can indeed see and determine whether or not what the minister is telling us of the goals of the Research Council, whether they're being met and whether or not we're doing as much as we can or whether there are ways in which we can expand the Research Council and their role in our society.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe it would be important that we take a more in-depth and broader view of this piece of legislation before we get into further debate on the issue. And at this time, I therefore move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 77 — The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2000.

In July 1996, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission released its report on human rights in Saskatchewan. This report, *Renewing the Vision, Human Rights in Saskatchewan*, was the result of several years of extensive consultation and research by the commission.

In this report, Mr. Speaker, the commission summarized the context of its review in the following way, and I quote:

Saskatchewan's tradition of protecting human rights began with The Saskatchewan Bill of Rights Act in 1947, the first general human rights statute in North America. In 1972 Saskatchewan established the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission, and in 1979 it amalgamated and improved all previous human rights legislation by enacting The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. The Code outlines the structure and duties of the commission, establishes a complaint process and contains programs for equity programs and exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, the commission went on to state that: "Over the previous 17 years, the Code (had) become outdated." Specifically the commission indicated that its "structure (required) improvement, and the complaint system had proven unable to deal with the volume and complexity of human rights complaints."

Mr. Speaker, the government agrees with the commission's assessment of the current state of affairs.

Saskatchewan can claim a proud history in the protection of human rights. However, the time has come to make changes to the structures and procedures in our Code to ensure that we continue to respond to current concerns and help the commission in its objective of advancing the cause of human rights.

Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be proposing a number of amendments that are intended to recognize the importance this government places on human rights and the prevention of discrimination against our citizens.

First the statutory position of director of human rights is being removed from the code. The administrative and operational responsibilities formerly performed by the director will become the responsibilities of the Chief Commissioner.

The Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission members should be responsible for policy rather than day-to-day operational decisions, Mr. Speaker. As a consequence, amendments provide that operational decisions now made by all of the commission members will be made in future by the Chief Commissioner. This will allow the commission to focus on policy decisions to forward the principle that every person is free and equal in

dignity and rights.

The proposed amendments also streamline and add flexibility to the complaint process, create a human rights tribunal, make changes respecting some of the grounds of discrimination, and enhance the remedy and enforcement provisions.

As well as provisions to make the administration of the commission more efficient, the Bill proposes significant changes to the process by which complaints are administered. The commission will now be able to tailor its procedure to different types of complaints and appropriate procedures.

Mr. Speaker, the commission has already started to adapt its procedures by implementing an early resolution process in an effort to settle complaints sooner and in a non-adversarial manner. The amendments specifically recognize resolution by mediation between the parties as a desirable approach to resolving a human rights complaint.

Mr. Speaker, the current code doesn't include a limitation period. As a result, actions that may have occurred many years ago could be the subject of a complaint to the commission and respondents could be called upon to respond to complaints based on events that occurred several years previously.

(1500)

With the passage of time, records may no longer be available, witnesses may be difficult to find, and their memories of the specifics of the relevant event may be unclear.

The Bill provides that the commission shall refuse to accept a complaint if the person doesn't bring the complaint to the commission within two years of becoming aware of the alleged discriminatory conduct.

As well, a new provision will allow the commission to defer dealing with a complaint where another proceeding is capable of appropriately dealing with the substance of the complaint. For example, Mr. Speaker, the collective bargaining agreement applicable to the employment relationship or the occupational health and safety regulations may have procedures that are available to address the situation in a satisfactory manner.

The Bill also permits the commission to dismiss a complaint where it determines another proceeding has dealt with the subject matter appropriately.

Another change, Mr. Speaker, gives the commission the authority to dismiss a complaint in a number of situations. The current code provides that the commission may only dismiss a complaint where it's without merit. The code is being amended to provide that the Chief Commissioner can dismiss a complaint where the complaint raises no significant issue of discrimination, is made in bad faith, or for improper motives.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to the code will provide that where the Chief Commissioner dismisses a complaint, the complainant may apply to a human rights tribunal for a hearing, and if the tribunal agrees to hear the complaint, the complainant will be responsible for the carriage of his or her own complaint in these cases.

The creation of the human rights tribunal panel, Mr. Speaker, constitutes another significant change to how human rights complaints are currently administered. The code currently provides for the Minister of Justice to appoint a board of inquiry after a direction to do so from the commission.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments provide for an appointed adjudicative body, the human rights tribunal panel. The panel will consist of at least three people — one of whom will be the chairperson. We believe these changes will provide for an adjudicative body with expertise in human rights issues and, Mr. Speaker, the accompanying consistency in decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the tribunal can order compensation for specific damages such as wage loss, reinstatement and other rights lost because of discrimination, remedial or preventative measures, anti-discrimination policies and educational sessions, as well as damages for injury to feelings and self-respect.

The only change respecting the remedies the tribunal may order is raising the maximum amount the tribunal can order in damages for injury to feelings, dignity, or self-respect from 5,000 to \$10,000. Increasing the maximum amount, Mr. Speaker, recognizes that persons who've been denied basic human rights are not less worthy of having their feelings and dignity compensated than other persons protected by our laws.

We're also amending the code to update the grounds of discrimination. Thus, Mr. Speaker, an amendment to the definition of disability removes the necessity of determining the cause of a disability. It may not be possible to determine whether a person's physical disability has been caused by an injury, birth defect, or illness, and this inability to determine the cause should not prevent the person with the disability from being protected by the code. These persons will now receive the protection of the Human Rights Code.

Mr. Speaker, in addition the current definition includes reliance on a guard dog . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, on a guide dog. This has changed . . . Some guide dogs are guard dogs too, I'm sure, Mr. Speaker. This has changed to refer to service animal, recognizing all animals that assist persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, another amendment will add perceived race as a ground in the code. Academics and multicultural community groups are currently of the opinion that the concept of separate races is no longer supported by science. Rather, they say, distinctions are made on the basis of what is perceived as someone's race. We're including a change to make the code more user friendly by adding a definition of prohibited ground. This will mean that the grounds will no longer be listed in all of the provisions where discrimination may occur such as in employment, accommodation, and services.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, we're making several other amendments that don't come within the categories that I've described. For instance, a new provision will allow complaints against co-workers where one employee harasses a fellow employee. Apparently the complaint must be made against the employer who may not have even known about the harassment. Allowing complaints against employees will mean that in some situations where it's appropriate, a co-worker will have to bear the consequences of his or her own discriminatory behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, the government believes that these changes will assist the commission in its efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of procedures for dealing with human rights complaints. We believe that these changes also reflect the fact that the government is responsive to the need to ensure that persons who require the benefit of the protection offered by human rights legislation will, in fact, receive that protection.

We believe also, Mr. Speaker, that these amendments continue this province's strong and proud tradition of recognizing that persons subject to stigma and stereotyping because of characteristics that are irrelevant to their abilities will have access to the opportunities available to everyone in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I now move second reading of An Act to amend The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to stand and talk on the Human Rights Code Amendment Act, Bill No. 77, and a number of the things that the minister had mentioned, including guide or guard dogs, whichever the case may be.

I think when we deal in the issue of human rights and Human Rights Code, it's a very . . . an interesting area, and there's a lot of questions that come into play and a lot of personalities and sides when you start dealing with human rights and one person's belief compared to another person's belief.

And so when we start making changes in the code, we want to make sure those changes are done right. Because if we don't get it right this time, there can be some people that are really kind of left out of the loop and can be some real problems.

I applaud the minister when he talks about trying to gear it so that the complaints can be heard sooner. Definitely the longer it waits, sometimes the issues get a little muddied and it's probably not as clear. Although they do talk about a limitation period as far as how soon a hearing can be brought back: if it hadn't been heard, hadn't been brought to the human rights tribunal, after two years it would not be able to.

And I think there . . . you know, we want to talk to as many people as we can on this very issue to see how that's going to affect them. We ourselves are a little leery of that in a way in that when you hear of some of the different cases that have gone on in — and I mean it's a little different — but in through the court system and how wrongful decisions have been made many years, and it takes many, many years for that to come back and be corrected.

And so I think we have some concern after the two-year period that nothing can be done. We want to talk to the people that it's going to involve the most though and see what they have to say.

The tribunal body, and the minister talked about appointing three members to look after this tribunal body that would make the decisions on any cases that are being heard. And any time when we hear members opposite in government appointing

members to hear cases, it does draw up some red flags.

And we'd be very interested to see the process of appointment and how these people will be appointed, who they will be. Because the responsibility these people are going to have are great, and they'll be making decisions on all sorts of things within the human rights area. And so we'd want to make sure that the people that are appointed for this tribunal are the people that are most qualified, to hear them and be as fair as they possibly can be.

Another issue raised is he had talked about the maximum remuneration, I guess, or payback for people that have been wrongly done by, raising from 5,000 to 10,000. And I think, you know, we look at that with . . . I don't see anything else that has gone down; everything else has gone up. And if this hasn't been addressed for a number of years, we could agree with that I would think.

The area of co-workers he talks about, that won't be falling under this because there could be a dispute between co-workers. And that is also a problem. When you get into human rights and human rights issues, as I mentioned earlier at the start, it becomes very . . . it can be a very controversial, I guess, area.

And so when you're dealing with co-workers, I guess just to label it, if it's a co-worker it does not apply. But if there are some issues that are truly human rights issues in that area, we would want to make sure that that would be covered properly.

So those are a couple of the areas that I just wanted to respond to, to the ministerial speech, second reading. And until we can talk to the stakeholders and the people that are going to be involved directly with these amendments, we would like to adjourn debate on this until we are able to. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 78 — The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000. The Highway Traffic Act is the law governing roads and their use in Saskatchewan. These amendments will clarify some of the existing laws while continuing to make roads safer for Saskatchewan motorists.

The first amendment involves driver licensing and vehicle registration. The changes will eliminate unfairness, red tape, and confusion. Currently contractors working on road construction do not have to register trailers that they use as living quarters for their workers.

The exemption was originally intended to save the provincial government money when it was the main road builder in the province. However, now most provincial and municipal road construction is handled by private contractors. The proposed amendment will eliminate the exemption and require contractors to register trailers they use as living quarters for their workers. This will place all contractors, government and private, on equal footing.

Mr. Speaker, the next amendment will create more consistency in the vehicle registration process. Currently when you sell your vehicle, the certificate of registration expires immediately. However, when purchasing a car, you have insurance coverage for 14 days after the sale. This discrepancy between the certificate of registration and insurance coverage has caused much confusion for auto dealers and customers.

The proposed amendment would establish a consistent seven-day grace period for both registration and insurance. The result will eliminate confusion and make the Act consistent with The Automobile Accident Insurance Act regarding the transfer of licence plates and insurance coverage.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed change should facilitate the sale and purchase of vehicles in Saskatchewan.

The next amendment also concerns vehicle registration, Mr. Speaker. Current legislation prohibits Saskatchewan residents from operating a vehicle in Saskatchewan unless that vehicle is properly registered in this province. This means that a Saskatchewan resident cannot operate the vehicle of a friend or relative visiting from another province.

This is an oversight in our legislation, and the amendment will align our legislation with common practice and belief. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan residents will be able to operate vehicles that are properly registered in another jurisdiction.

The next amendment will make it easier for foreign visitors to drive in Saskatchewan. Current legislation requires foreign visitors to hold an international driving permit if their driver's licence is not written in English or French.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, some people who hold a valid driver's licence from their country of origin, but not an international driving permit, are unable to legally drive or rent a vehicle in Saskatchewan. Quebec and Saskatchewan are the only provinces that require non-resident drivers to obtain an international driving permit.

The proposed amendment brings us into line with our neighbouring provinces and removes a possible barrier to tourism in Saskatchewan.

The next amendment, Mr. Speaker, will create consistency between existing licensing restrictions and driver-training restrictions.

Saskatchewan does not currently have a minimum age for in-car driver training. This means the driver instructors can legally provide in-car training to people under the age of 15. Existing licensing restrictions, however, do not permit a person to obtain a learner's licence until one is 15 years old and registered in a high school driver training program. The proposed amendment would require an individual to be at least 15 or older before taking in-car driver training. Mr. Speaker, this will make in-car driver training restrictions consistent with current licensing restrictions.

(1515)

The next amendment concerns the rules of the road and the use

of flashing lights on vehicles on highways. Provisions under The Vehicle Equipment Regulations, 1987 require the regulation of the use of white, amber, blue, and red lights on vehicles.

Concern has been raised over the use of blue lights on snow removal vehicles. Prior to the present equipment regulations, blue flashing lights were permitted on snow removal vehicles such as snowploughs. Blue lights are no longer used on these types of vehicles because they are reserved exclusively for law enforcement vehicles.

The proposed amendment would establish rules for the use of flashing amber lights on snow removal vehicles. This will allow road users to better identify types of emergency vehicles by creating a common standard. Mr. Speaker, this will improve traffic safety for all motorists.

The next amendment, Mr. Speaker, concerns emergency vehicles. Current legislation requires drivers to slow down when passing highway workers but does not require drivers to slow down when passing emergency personnel on the highway. Mr. Speaker, emergency personnel often work on or near highway lanes where they are at risk. The proposed amendment would require motorists to slow down to 60 kilometres per hour when passing emergency vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, the request for this amendment comes from the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) and the Saskatchewan Association of Fire Chiefs. This change would greatly improve the safety on Saskatchewan roads and highways. It would also help protect emergency workers when they are on or near the travelled portion of the highway.

The next amendment aims to clarify the rules for seat belt use. Proper seat belt and restraint device use is the best way to protect people, especially children, from collision-related injuries. Under current legislation, learner drivers under the age of 16 are exempt from the requirement to wear a seat belt. Further, Mr. Speaker, the legislation does not require that young children and infants be placed in a proper child or infant restraint system if they wear a seat belt.

The amendment requires that all drivers and passengers must be properly restrained. It also requires that all children and infants be in a proper restraint system. The amendment is based on model legislation developed by the Canadian Council of Motor Transport Administrators.

Mr. Speaker, it should be noted that SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) continues to support programs to lend appropriate child restraints to low-income families as required.

The next amendment addresses medical exemptions for seat belt use. Current legislation allows for individuals to be exempted from the requirement to wear a seat belt if they have a certificate from a medical practitioner stating that they are unable to wear a seat belt for medical reasons.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Medical Association and the Canadian Medical Association advocate the use of restraint systems in all vehicles and state that medical exemptions from seat belt use are not justified. As such, the proposed changes

would allow SGI to provide seat belt exemptions at their discretion.

Mr. Speaker, the next two amendments concern red lights. Currently left turns on red lights are not permitted under the Act. The first proposed amendment would permit left turns from one one-way street to another one-way street, improving urban traffic flow.

Mr. Speaker, more than 40 per cent of accidents in this province occur at intersections. Furthermore, many of these accidents result from red light violations. The second proposed amendment allows for red light cameras at intersections. The installation of these cameras can be expected to reduce the number of automobile accidents in the province, thus saving lives and reducing property damage.

Mr. Speaker, the next amendment clarifies provisions respecting funeral processions. The amendment encourages the tradition of showing respect for funeral processions. While the current legislation states that a funeral procession must obey all rules of the road and must obey traffic control signals, this amendment clarifies the right-of-way at controlled intersections.

The next amendment, Mr. Speaker, concerns the carrier audit and the carrier profile and compliance program. These programs are being implemented in an effort to improve safety for those in the trucking industry as well as all other road users.

Proposed changes would enable SGI and the Highway Traffic Board to share the responsibility for administering these programs.

The final amendment deals specifically with better meeting the needs of individual SGI customers and expanding coverage in certain circumstances. SGI and the provincial government understand that there are instances where applying the strict application of legislation would create a hardship for Saskatchewan residents. In the past, SGI has encountered situations where the legislation has prohibited certain actions but concern for customer service or undue hardships to individuals have required SGI to act contrary to legislation.

The proposed amendment will permit SGI to exempt an individual from meeting the strict requirements of the legislation if it is determined that it would create an undue hardship and would not be contrary to public interest to allow the exemption.

That concludes the list of proposed amendments found in The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000. These amendments work to make our roads safer for all Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to amend The Highway Traffic Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege, a real privilege to talk on this Bill, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000, Bill No. 78. It's an area that I've probably dealt with for about 20 years. And some of these very issues really strike close to home because it's stuff that I've

really lived and breathed for a number of years, whether it was with my own business in the driver training area or whether it was many years with the traffic safety . . . the Saskatchewan Safety Council dealing in traffic issues.

So a lot of these issues I've had some experience with and am quite interested to hear them being addressed today. Because for years and years we lobbied and pushed for certain changes. And there's a couple of Bills that are coming up, this being one of them, and another one dealing with a number of issues on rules of the road through SGI, and I'm going to be very interested.

I was going to adjourn debate or second reading on that, and I decided I wanted to wait until I could get more into it as opposed to just hearing it once and then responding. So I'm really looking forward to that one also.

It started with the road construction. And it was very interesting that you'd bring up road construction today after the discussion in the House on contractors and things like that, doing more and more of the road construction all the time. Unfortunately not maybe quite enough but certainly doing more and more, and evening the playing field there.

The seven-day grace period for when you buy and sell vehicles and purchasing. There was some grey area there and I know I had some questions too at times on how that whole system worked and whether you're insured, whether you weren't insured and to even the playing field with this seven days will certainly help.

More into the area that I was involved in, when you deal with foreign visitors coming into Canada and they had to have an international driver's licence, that is a very interesting one. I know I've talked to different people that were travelling in Canada and they would seem to get in touch with us at the Safety Council quite often to see whether they could drive legally in our province. And quite often, unless they had an international licence, of course they couldn't. We and Quebec, as was mentioned, are the only provinces that didn't have this in place and we're looking at, through this Bill, as addressing that problem.

There are a couple of concerns however with that whole issue. I know for years between provinces, you know, we had a reciprocity agreement to have certain standards. And if you met certain standards in one province it was okay in the next province. And there is some concern when dealing with people coming from out of nation, off the continent to drive in Saskatchewan. Are they indeed able to and equipped to?

I had the experience often with different exchange students that would come to Canada — it was an agriculture exchange where students would come from all over the world to spend the summer in Saskatchewan and deal in agriculture issues — and I did some driver training, I guess; first of all some in-classroom and then also some in-vehicle. And I do know that their rules of the road and their knowledge base and everything else will vary quite a bit, especially when you deal within Saskatchewan with the number of grid roads.

We had some exchange students coming from other countries

that had a valid driver's licence that had never driven on a grid road. And they're going to be driving on a lot of grid roads here in Saskatchewan — on some of them, whether they are able to. And there's certainly some problems there.

So you know, I don't know all the background on this but, you know, if people are coming from other countries, and I realize the international licence is more of just a written process and certainly not in the driving, but I would be very concerned that we do keep the standard as high as possible.

I used to know the numbers off by heart where we have one person injured every day in . . . every hour in Saskatchewan due to traffic collisions. And when we start bringing a number of more people in that perhaps aren't as competent or capable, there could be some problems. So you know, I'd want to get a little more information on that before we go too much further.

The driver training area, that they have to be 15 years of age before they can do any in-vehicle training. And that's a very interesting issue because I dealt with it for 10 years when I had my own company of teaching high school students.

And one of the problems that comes with this is that in my situation I was travelling from school to school to school and I had a routine every year. But sometimes you get to the school a little bit earlier, the person would be 14, he would be 15 by the time I was done and I wouldn't be back there for another year. You know, so if you didn't get in this section of driver training in rural Saskatchewan — it's not quite so bad in the cities where there's more and more classes going through — but in a lot of schools and rural schools the driver trainer will come there once a year, and so if he just misses it by a few days or a few weeks he'll be 16 by the time the driver educator gets back.

So you know the whole benefit of getting that year's — I don't want to say probation although we do have a probationary licence — but that whole year of driving under supervision is lost for certain people in rural Saskatchewan.

So you know with this they have to be at least 15 before they take the in-vehicle. You know I could maybe live with that, if they can start the driver training program even though they are 14 but not take any of the in-vehicle. So they can go through the written portion but not the driving portion and the instructor could come back later at the very end of his term there and pick up on the driver . . . the in-vehicle portion, would be acceptable.

But I just don't know how, you know, if it has to be an exact 15 and there are going to be some situations where I know when I've dealt with it where kids fall through the cracks and you get parents mad because they can't wait until their son or daughter gets that learner's licence to start helping on the farm as soon as possible even though they can only drive with parents and the driver instructor.

I found more importantly than that specific age limit of 15 is when they have to be 15 when they're enrolled in a . . . to get their learner's, to enrol in a driver training course in order to get their licence.

And I've had situations where the person decided not to, not very often, come to the classes and they would be out of the

program and it took forever for SGI or anybody else, any other regulating body, to go to that person and say you're no longer in the program, you no longer have a valid driver's licence.

That was probably the bigger problem is they'd come to the course, they'd take one or two in-class sessions, they'd get their learner's licence, and then they'd never go back and they had their learner's licence and by the time SGI was able to get to that situation, the person had been driving for six months practically and now he's 16 and there's nothing that can be done about it.

So that whole driver training issue . . . this is only one of many, many things that I wouldn't mind talking about. But I'm going to move on.

You talked about the blue lights on snow removal and for years and years and years blue lights were reserved for snow removal. And then of course a number of years ago when police started using flashing red and blue is when you saw blue lights taken off of snow removal. And really I can honestly say there's not very often that I see a vehicle with a flashing blue light unless it's RCMP.

And it was only restricted for snow removal and I really thought that was a good method because it distinguished snow removal on the highways. It was the only vehicle that had a flashing blue light and we've taken that away so now snow removal has flashing amber which there are a lot of different vehicles that can carry flashing amber, that display flashing amber.

This legislation removes snow removal from the flashing blue light area, and I do have some concerns with that. Because I know again when I was involved, directly involved, it was one way that you could know exactly what was snow removal and what wasn't. And so there is some concern with that.

But I realize this is probably so far down the path that it's never going to be turned around and brought back that the RCMP won't be using flashing blue lights.

Emergency vehicles. In slowing to 60 kilometres when you're passing emergency vehicles when they're stopped on the highway — of course we have the orange zone where they have to be down to 60 kilometres per hour — this is going to be a little bit different and it's going to be a little more difficult to control and enforce I would think.

When you're on, for example, a divided highway and there's an RCMP stopped on the side of the road, well off on the side of the road doing whatever they're doing with the driver, and if you're in the left lane and go by over 60 kilometres per hour, is that an offence? And by the looks of it that will be an offence.

Certainly on some of our secondary highways when there's not enough room for people to get off to the side of the road, when the emergency vehicle doesn't have enough room to get off to the side of the road, I would think it would be common safe driving practices to have slowed to that much anyway.

As a matter of fact on most of the highways in Saskatchewan, secondary highways, I think you could put a 60 kilometre per hour speed limit on them and it would be no problem. Because

the secondary highways I've been travelling on lately, I can't go any faster than 60 kilometres per hour. Especially Highway 35. I can't believe the shape that was in. You'd be hard pressed to get much over 60 kilometres per hour and maintain any sort of control of your vehicle.

But certainly you know when you deal with . . . and you had mentioned, the minister had mentioned, Mr. Speaker, that it was the RCMP and the firefighters that were in favour of this. And certainly it is for their safety.

There has been a couple of situations in our province in the recent time frame where there has been some fatalities on the side of the road, and that's where this is all driven from. And I couldn't agree more.

But I think if you looked at those situations, quite often where there was some problems, there is usually a lot of other side factors involved and including alcohol. And the one that I can think of not very far out of Regina, you know, it was a major issue, was the alcohol. It wasn't necessarily the speed limit of being 60 kilometres when you're passing them; it was other issues.

So there are some concerns with that. But I mean I think the whole point of it all is to try and increase the safety on the highways for the emergency vehicles. I would personally myself, just under my own situation, any time I get passing flashing red and blues, or flashing reds of an ambulance, I'm going to be down to 60. I'm slowing down from a hundred, exactly a hundred, down to 60 normally.

So it probably won't affect me quite as much as some of the others I think, probably opposite, that have to probably cut their speed in half to get down to the 60 kilometre per hour side.

Seat belts is another issue. And all children must be properly restrained — it goes into that area. It goes into medical exemptions that I want to touch on. But the issue on seat belts and child restraints, I think — and if you have been following any of the media from SGI — is it's not the fact that people don't know that their children should be in restraints, it's the fact that probably 90 per cent of the restraints are installed incorrectly.

And I think that's an area that probably needs a whole lot more time and effort than . . . I mean this is probably more of a housecleaning issue that all children have to be in restraints depending on weight and size. But I think the bigger issue is just the fact that the restraints are just . . . are not installed correctly. And it just takes away from the whole benefit of a child restraint.

Medical exemptions — CMA and Canadian Medical Association have been dealing with this and I've been in many, many meetings with the SMA — I should say, the Saskatchewan Medical Association — where they were saying that the exemptions, there was no need for a seat belt exemption.

And we echoed that thought. And we pushed hard for that. I think if — and I don't have the number right in front of me or on the tip of my tongue any more — but it was something like

90 per cent of the exemptions were granted by about 2 or 3 per cent of the doctors. And some doctors truly believe that the exemption was necessary. They were medical doctors; we took their word for it. But when you have the whole association saying, from what they could see there is nothing that would cause an exemption on seat belt use.

Now I know there is some members in our caucus that may not agree with me totally, but I think with a bit of convincing and lobbying within my own caucus that they would say that was probably not a bad idea. You know I guess to wipe it out, that's there's absolutely no medical situation that would cause an exemption — and I think what we'd want to do is talk to a few more doctors that are granting these and see what is the point.

Because like I said, there are so many of them that are granting all the exemptions and I think it was more of a fact that perhaps that physician didn't agree with seat belts more than the fact that that person didn't . . . shouldn't be wearing a seat belt. So I think from our side of it I'd like to talk to them a little bit more and see what . . . just make sure but when I was dealing with it that that was certainly the case.

The red light — no right turn on . . . or no left turn on red light. We are the only province . . . I know in most every other province in Canada, you can make a left turn from a red light, on a red light from a one-way street onto a one-way street. And in Saskatchewan here we needed a solid green arrow before you could do it. Isn't that amazing that we're changing that? You guys are just hanging on every word and I'm sure glad you are.

But I think if you were to poll most of the drivers out there, they said you could turn left from one-way to one-way on a red light and nobody even knew whether there was a green light there or not. As far as a driver examiner and a driver educator, it was great to catch people on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, that's . . . I don't know if we should make it any easier for people to turn left because that's a little scary.

One of the last things I wanted to touch on, and you mentioned it too, is funeral processions — that they must follow the rules of the road. There was some area of grey in there and we used to have lots and lots of questions.

It used to be that if they had their headlights on, they were part of a funeral procession and they could . . . all drivers were to yield to a funeral procession, regardless of controlled or uncontrolled and things like that, I think is how it was written at one point.

But now, since 1990, that all manufactured vehicles have to have daytime running lights in Canada, it really made it a little difficult . . . Like, were you supposed to drive with your lights on bright so you really had your lights on as opposed to daylight running lights?

And so changing it that they have to follow the rules of the road, I think, really is probably a good idea. It clears up any of that grey area where you get a whole band of vehicles going through. And I know it probably was not uncommon, especially in the cities where somebody wanted to get through the intersection, they flipped on their lights and they went through with the funeral procession and then turned off.

So this way they are going to have to follow the rules of the road, which we think is probably a good idea.

I think those are the main areas. There are a few areas, like I said, that we want to make some calls and make sure it follows along with the way people want to see this legislation move and the way the minister wants to see the legislation move, so I would like to adjourn debate right now on this Highway Traffic Amendment Act. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 64

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 64 — The Fiscal Stabilization Fund Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that this Bill establishes a new fund that removes some of the money from the liquor and gaming fund and places it in this Fiscal Stabilization Fund or a fancy slush fund as we like to call it. And since Mr. Speaker has already warned me about some of the names that I gave it in my reply to the budget, I won't pursue that any farther.

It's the government's contention, Mr. Speaker, that the Fiscal Stabilization Fund will be more visible than the liquor and gaming fund. Mr. Speaker, it's easy to imagine the government reportedly balancing the budget and let's say by \$8 million and refusing to free up funds for education or health care or roads because they claim to be taking the fiscal high road and not wanting to risk running into a deficit situation, while at the same time there may be let's say three or four hundred million dollars in the liquor and gaming fund, outside of the General Revenue Fund where it is impossible to find out how much money is really there.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor has been commenting on this type of budgetary hocus-pocus for many years and has been calling on this government to present one set of books at budget time that accurately reflects all of the government's revenue and expenses. The government says that this is what this new fund accomplishes. They maintain that it will be accounted for in the General Revenue Fund.

But what about the liquor and gaming fund, Mr. Deputy Speaker? What will become of it? Will the liquor and gaming fund disappear as it should? Or will it still be around and still be available to the government as a tool that will continue to enable them to use the fund to fix the books and show almost any bottom line that they want to see in the budget?

I'm very skeptical when I see this government that has a reputation for being very secretive suddenly, after being pummelled at the polls into a very thin minority position and then cutting a deal with the third party in this Assembly to form

a coalition government, Mr. Speaker, I'm very skeptical when I see this government suddenly appear to be open and accountable.

Mr. Speaker, their near death experience in September didn't teach them anything about health, or education, or highways, or agriculture. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I doubt that it taught them anything about openness and accountability either.

This government has had nine years to follow the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor and now I see them as sadly lacking in credibility when they pretend to be more open and accountable now that they realize their days in government are numbered.

Mr. Speaker, what about the Crowns . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg your pardon. The Crowns currently account for about 40 per cent of all government activity. But what with all of this activity and all of this revenue generated from the Crowns, all that is reported on the year . . .

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But with all of this activity and all of this revenue generated from the Crowns, all that is reported on a year-to-year basis is the amount of the dividend, which is a number decided by the government arbitrarily.

I agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the Provincial Auditor when he says that all of the Crown numbers and the liquor and gaming fund should be reported on budget day. Then, and only then, Mr. Speaker, will the people of Saskatchewan get an accurate reflection of the real financial picture of the government of this province.

The Saskatchewan Party proposed The Government Accountability Act, which would bring all of these numbers together in the bottom line of the budget. Of course, Mr. Speaker, the government refuses to let this Bill come up for debate year after year.

There's nothing radical in this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's just a law like the laws that exist in most other provinces. However, still they block it at every turn. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this clearly shows their interest in openness and accountability.

There's also the matter of unfunded pension liabilities, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Since the NDP came to office, unfunded pension liabilities which will eventually come due, have grown in this province by over \$1 billion.

This is a very complicated and somewhat boring issue, and one that the media has shown little interest in to date. However, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the issue of unfunded pension liabilities is of great importance vis-a-vis the long-term financial stability of this province.

Mr. Speaker, this government is reliant upon federal equalization payments as never before. And as long as Saskatchewan is a have-not province, I'm pleased that these funds are in place and available to us.

But, Mr. Speaker, no government slush fund and no number of government slush funds are going to make us a have province. Only diligence and business acumen will ever accomplish that, Mr. Speaker.

Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 41

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 41 — The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise to participate in the second reading debate on Bill No. 41, The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2000. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill has some very important implications and ramifications for the medical profession and particularly the doctors of this province.

(1545)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there has been some time now that there have been some real concerns the way the conduct of medical practice in this province has been occurring, and particularly — it's true across the province — but also in much greater importance in rural Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you go over the list of communities that have the services of only one physician in this province, it's a fairly extensive list. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a list that causes some concern for myself and for the official opposition because in meetings that we've had not only with physicians across this province, but more telling in a meeting that we had with medical students, learning and studying to become medical practitioners in this province, they indicated real concern about the future of medical practice in single and even double physician centres in the province.

And part of the reason that they expressed their concern is of course economic. But many of the issues that they raise have nothing to do with economics at all, but have to do with issues surrounding training and advancement and updates and courses, and more importantly, the actual quality of life that a medical practitioner is going to experience in that circumstance.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we talk about the future of medical professionals in this province, it's extremely important that we use a great deal of wisdom and a great deal of insight into how any changes are going to occur in regard to the practice of medicine in this province.

Mr. Speaker, there simply has been far too much short-sightedness occurring in this province, and really across the nation. It is of an absolute amazement to myself to have learned in our discussions with medical professionals that it was a very short few years ago that the actual number of training seats in Saskatchewan and in Canada were reduced with the mistaken feeling that there would not be the requirement for the

number of medical trained people across this province. Right across this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were reductions in the number of training seats provided for medical professionals.

And I'm heckled from across the way about who did that. Well everybody did it. Because I think when the decisions were made, there were in power in this province governments of every philosophical stripe. And so it isn't something that is inherently short-sighted by one political individual or not, it was across the piece — there was a short-sightedness in terms of what was going to be required.

And in meeting with people at the University of Saskatchewan, the College of Medicine, they said that the reverse is now beginning to happen and there is a recognition that more needs to be done in order to attract and train medical professionals in our own country.

Mr. Speaker, in the past there's been far too much reliant on meeting crisis of shortage of medical professionals by importing people from other countries. And so we've seen in the past where there was a fairly major number of people coming to us from Great Britain and Ireland — quality people that had very, very quality training and knowledge that were of tremendous service to this province.

And more recently we've seen a similar wave happening again in a recurring way where we've seen a great many people coming from South Africa to our province that have provided tremendous service, not only in rural Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan as well.

But too often what we've done is failed to really address and identify the issues that were pertinent to our own people and why they weren't coming into the profession, why we weren't training enough of them, and when we did train them, why they were not staying in the province that they were raised in and trained in and practising medicine there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are a number of reasons why they didn't do that. And certainly in single-practice communities and things of that nature, the issues surrounding support, and collegial support and professional associations and things of that nature are important — family life and personal life preferences.

But as well as that there was always the issue of the lure of other jurisdictions who provided a more attractive setting for one reason or another. Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of those issues, unfortunately or fortunately but realistically, had to do with not just the remuneration for services rendered. It's not all the time how much you make that counts; it's how much you get to keep.

And the issue surrounding medical incorporation, where one of the issues that were raised to us time and time again that was indicated that this is one of the main reasons why people were looking at other jurisdictions more favourably, because there were a number of them that allowed for professional incorporation of medical professionals.

Mr. Speaker, we realize that was a concern. And the

Saskatchewan Party in the previous or in the past election had as a platform plank the recognition that professional incorporation, not restricted to medical incorporation but professional incorporation, was going to be something that was going to be very important to the province if we were not only going to train and retain people, but make it in their financial interest and in a competitive way to practise their profession in this province.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation, Bill 41, envisages the ability of medical professionals to incorporate under the statutes of the province. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we of course support that very much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in addition to that though we do have some concerns, not in terms of who is included in this, but who is excluded. Across this province we have met with other medical professionals — chiropractors, dentists, radiologists — people that as well as the general practitioners and medical professionals, who also contribute a great deal to the health care delivery system in this province and who are excluded from the same opportunities that have been availed to the medical professionals under this legislation. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we certainly would like to raise that as an issue of concern as well.

Too often where this government goes wrong in their approach to issues that are facing it is they pick winners and losers. They take sides. They look in a very narrow, unfocused way at what they're going to do to just get the current problem off their plate and off their agenda. And too often what we have is short-sighted and incomplete legislation, all being that it is well intentioned, and we believe that this Bill falls into that category.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to go on record in principle as saying we certainly do support the ability for the medical professions in this province — professionals — to incorporate; however, I have to say that we're very concerned that it is a very select list and it excludes many more people than it does include. And we think other professionals should be considered for the same consideration as well.

The second major part of this legislation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, addresses the issue of medical liability and insurability. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I won't go through the issue and the specific issue that brought this shortcoming to light, but in brief, as you're aware, there was an individual who suffered some significant damages at the hands of an incompetent general practitioner and that upon review of her circumstances through the courts of this province, she was awarded a settlement in excess of \$2 million for the malpractice that was clearly evident by this medical professional.

And the unfortunate, sad part of this story, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that this woman clearly had a claim, clearly was aggrieved by the medical professional who was liable and negligent and who, because this individual fled the country, is now unable to fulfill the requirements of standing good for the claim that was awarded to her by the courts. And because this individual did not carry medical liability insurance, there is no one to hold responsible for this circumstance.

And so we have a situation where one of our citizens has clearly

been aggrieved, was clearly awarded damages because of medical malpractice, who is now without recourse because of the fact that this government did not provide for proper direction and a legislative framework to require the college of physicians and surgeons to see to it that this was indeed in place.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's really unfortunate that it takes this kind of tragic circumstance and situation to bring it to light to government, that they should have been on top of this beforehand.

And so it goes without saying that we support this legislation as well. It's extremely necessary, it's unfortunate it is as late coming as it is. This government's been in place for nine or ten years and to wait until something tragic like this happened is unfortunate.

However we as well, in principle, certainly very much support that it's an absolute necessity for anybody practising medicine in this province to be covered by professional liability insurance. And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in principle we also support this component of the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are issues surrounding this legislation; it is important. However I think that I've indicated to this House and to the people of the province that the position of the official opposition in principle to this legislation is supportive. The issues that we have in detail to discuss about the specific wording of clauses and the specific way the legislation is going to be addressed certainly can be addressed in committee. And I have no problem letting this legislation proceed to that course now.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Melenchuk that **Bill No. 13 — The Education Amendment Act/Loi de 2000 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before addressing the aspects of this Bill, I'd like to say that there are some concerns over the move to place post-secondary education to a separate Act.

Given the various and numerous issues facing post-secondary education right now, I'm confident that this action will make it more accessible and that it will save money or that it will provide more benefits for the students. Of course we're all aware that it will provide the opportunity for most ministers and their NDP or Liberal assistants to be hired.

The amendments as laid out in this Bill cover a number of areas, and I feel it's important that those areas be addressed on an individual basis.

The section that deals with the setting up a separate school

division based on minority faith and the rules and regulations surrounding this require added input. There's also a section that deals with providing education for students with disabilities, as well as a section that deals with tendering process for school divisions.

It is our understanding that a number of consultations were held in the drafting of this Bill — among them the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors, and Superintendents, and the Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials.

We hope that the recommendations and suggestions as set out by these organizations would be taken into consideration and, where possible, included in the proposed legislation.

After all, these organizations are the ones who represent and work very closely with teachers, administrators, school boards. And they know first-hand how well the current legislation is or is not working and how the process might be changed that we see a positive effect in all those involved. Whether it be public or separate, there can be no doubt that schools across the province are facing very difficult times. There are many issues that must be addressed, issues that will very likely be impacted by proposed legislation.

As we're all aware the teachers in this province rejected, recently rejected a proposed contract that would give them a 7.2 increase in wages and benefits. The rejection of this contract has left everyone very concerned. A strike vote will be taken within the next week or so and the outcome of that could see the end of the school year disruption for students.

Since wage parity with other provinces is an issue, school boards are worried, once again, they will be held responsible for raising taxes to cover this. It's no secret that education in many school divisions is already funded by local tax base. Education funding is an increasingly important issue in this province.

(1600)

The amount of money allocated to education in Saskatchewan has dropped substantially over the last eight years — nearly \$380 million in total. That's a big hit for school boards. The ones who suffer the most are of course our children. This gives you a clear indication of the priority that this government has placed on education.

Education fared little better in this year's budget. The amount of money available for K to 12 education this year is just slightly than half of what the Minister of Education says it is. He says funding for education was 29 million. In actual fact, the amount was 18.5 million. When you subtract the designated expenditures amount, you're left with around 14 million.

This will not even come close to covering off the raise in teachers' salaries let alone any other requirements of programs or services. Bill 13 most certainly does not address funding shortfalls nor the impact that this will have on access to programs or services. For the past few years capital funding for education has been essentially frozen. Just how far that \$5 million coming from the Centenary Capital Fund will go is

anybody's guess, given the number of school divisions waiting for capital approval.

In fact some of our province's schools will be waiting for quite some time before they actually see any funding for their own capital projects. Disappointed with the lack of capital funding available, a number of schools have in fact doubled their own capital projects. That number will no doubt increase as capital funding shows no signs of increasing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this government has left school boards to take the hit for the lack of education funding. The optimum grant formula is widely accepted to be 60/40, where the government is supposed to provide 60 per cent of the money and the local tax base is to provide the rest.

Of course this government will just say that this is just a formula, something to use as a guideline. It's a sad fact that in Saskatchewan, numerous school divisions, the local tax base provides over 70 per cent of the funding. In some school divisions the operating fund for education has been completely eliminated. Taxpayers in those school divisions are completely funding education.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, school boards have little choice. With the lack of funding with the province, they have to turn to the local tax base for help in topping up their education money. The taxpayers have seen their property taxes increase to the point that tax revolt meetings are now not so much a rarity as a general occurrence. Taxpayers are maxed out. They've reached their limit. They cannot afford to pay more.

And I might add, Mr. Speaker, in the Redberry Lake constituency I attended more than . . . nearly 20 tax revolt meetings, and in each one the taxpayers in those RMs (rural municipality) voted to withhold their taxes. And they're very concerned about the future of their school divisions, and concerned for their education of their students and their children in the constituency of Redberry Lake.

And the proposal put forward by the government in the budget is very much lacking. And as we now see that the government has off-loaded more of the costs onto the local school board, and the local school board's going to have to increase their mill rate to take this into account. And thus again the taxes go up at the expense of our children and our taxpayer.

This Bill most certainly does not address the current lack of operating grant funding or the freeze on capital funding from the government. The bottom line is that the follow-up from this budget has not been good. And the president of the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) has in fact been very blunt about what has occurred so far.

He goes on to say teaching, administrative, and support staff are being cut. About 10 schools are being closed or the grades discontinued, and others are being monitored. He also says at least half the province's school boards have been forced to raise mill rates ranging from 1 to 3 per cent, and some may be forced to double this amount. Drastic measures to curb spending have been implemented, including delaying facility maintenance, bus purchases, technological upgrades.

Also as a result of lack of funding, we've seen teachers either leave their profession or left the province altogether like so many of our skilled and trained people have done in the past. Who can blame them? Who would want to work in these conditions when they can find better working conditions, better pay in other provinces in this country?

The teacher/student ratio has increased dramatically. It's a well-known fact that many teachers now find their classrooms so large that they are concerned about providing quality education to all students. I ask that the Minister of Education bear in mind that the ratio in his office may be 1:10. In many classrooms, the ratio is 1:25 or 30 or sometimes higher.

With cuts in funding, many teachers have begun to buy their own materials for use in classrooms. This is not referring to those items that might be considered extras. We're talking about books and videos — those things that a teacher thinks are important learning aids. It's incredible that we find teachers having to buy these materials for their students out of their own pocket. In fact, a recent released task force report on special education says that the province needs to spend more money to adequately meet the needs of all students.

We'd also like to point out that in February of this year, the Minister of Education sent a letter to school divisions across the province urging them not to sign on with the Youth News Network. The Youth News Network, or YNN, is a controversial network based out of Eastern Canada that provides monitors, computers, lab equipment, and other necessary items to those schools that agree to broadcast a commercially sponsored youth-oriented news program.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the real issue is not that school children would be exposed to commercial content during school time — a total of two and a half minutes which, when you compare that to what the average student might watch at home, seems not at all that high. No, the more important issue here is that if there is no money for capital purchases, then there's no money for special programs. And if there is no indication that any money will be available in the future, what choice do schools have? Left on their own they have to make some hard and fast decisions.

It should come as no surprise that seven schools in the province have already signed up with YNN. With the lack of available funding, no doubt there will be more to come.

It concerns me to hear the Minister of Education say that if school boards are unhappy with their current fiscal situation, they should just raise the mill rate. Easy for him to say. He should remember that he, too, was funded by taxpayer dollars; in fact there are two ministers of Education to be funded by taxpayer dollars, one of them K to 12 and the other is, of course, post-secondary.

In addressing the section dealing with setting up separate school divisions based on minority faith, I'd like to point out that we recognize and respect that many religions are practised within the province. Those residents practising the Catholic or Protestant religion are recognized being a minority faith. Current legislation allows residents of a minority faith to set up a separate school division. However, this is based on old

boundaries set out a number of decades ago.

The proposed amendment will change the boundaries that currently exist to effect a more modern approach, although given the members' opposite recent project regarding changing boundaries in rural areas and the public's widespread immediate rejection of that, I can only hope that changing school division boundaries would have a more favourable outcome.

I think the government needs to really address this because they've lost credibility with the people of Saskatchewan with their forced amalgamation, forced unionization, force, force, force. And I don't believe they should take that approach when they're dealing with changing these school boundaries. And it's very important that the change, when it does come, must be voluntary and should have the complete agreement of communities affected.

That's something this government hasn't learned, and I hope they will have learned that talking to the people closest to communities will give them a better understanding what is the right thing to do. And in keeping with the fact that school divisions are allowed to set their own assessment rates, I must reiterate again that assessment rates as set out by current board officials hardly go far enough to cover all funding in those districts.

Obviously these rates are already high, but school boards are being left with no choice but to keep raising them to maintain the education status quo. Whether it is a separate school or a public school to meet education demands, the assessment rate will no doubt be ever increasing.

There is also a section in this Bill that deals with providing education for students with disabilities. And it's become quite common now to find in our schools many children with disabilities. And that's an added cost onto the school board to integrate these children into the school system. And it is why they recognize that today's practice see individualized programs and integrate to regular classroom settings the students with disabilities, a practice that was acknowledged in the recent task force report on special education.

Again our major concern here is that the student-teacher ratio is very high, no matter how the student numbers break down. While student aides are available for those teachers with special needs students, the fact remains that teachers today are very worried about providing a solid, quality level of education for all students in their classroom. Again, while this Bill recognizes the importance of special education integration into the classroom, it does nothing to address the high teacher-student ratio.

Regarding school division tendering, I see that previous amounts have been replaced with new figures that should reflect a more modern, workable set of numbers. I understand that in the past the amounts allowed before tendering was to be done were so low that the schools found themselves tendering on everything, no matter how small the transaction.

I also understand that the school boards would have preferred to see these numbers even higher, such as those numbers that are

used in interprovincial trade agreements. These interprovincial trade agreements allow for more flexibility and simplifies the provinces and offers a wide variety of options in getting something done.

We're concerned that tendering in rural areas may not be necessarily the best way to do things. With the tendering regulations that must be followed, it does not allow a lot of leeway. School boards recognize that public accountability is an important factor too, but it's not always easy to accomplish, given some of the regulations that must be adhered to.

It's very important that we allow businesses and individuals in the rural areas to do as much of this work as possible in their home communities. It supplements their income. They likely have secondary jobs as farmers or doing other work and we must allow them to be as flexible as possible.

School boards know that the local labour markets must be utilized. And again, the best people that know the right thing to do are the local people that can handle these decisions. It has been suggested perhaps calls for proposals be considered. This would simplify the process and allow for some local business to be included.

A local base of supplies and contractors would be easily accessible and would in the long-run save time and money for many school boards — two very important issues that must constantly be kept in mind.

Some of the areas that this Bill does not cover are private schools, home schooling — these are areas that are growing widely in popularity — and also post-secondary training in farming, which is the backbone of our economy. And you only need to look at Ontario to see that it has a broader base to handle some of these areas.

Hands-on training are very important for the students. And also should be included in this program is teaching young people how to run a business, do a budget, a business plan. And as we know that small businesses are the job creator in this province, we should take a more active role in promoting and teaching our children how to run a business and excel in that area.

But given the various education issues that still need to be addressed by this government, and not including this Bill, at this time I therefore move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 28 — The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendments Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm pleased to be able to address the amendments to The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act, today.

As I go through the explanation of the needs for these amendments, I note that the one provision will allow the

children between the age of 18 and 21, who are receiving services pursuant to The Child and Family Services Act, to receive services also in addition to those receiving services pursuant to the Young Offenders Act. And I understand clearly why this is a very valuable amendment to this Act.

But, Mr. Deputy Chair, there are some parts of this Bill that do concern me. And I'd like to say, before I mention those concerns, that I have certainly a great admiration and respect for the work done by the Child Advocate as well as the Ombudsman in the province of Saskatchewan.

It is certainly due to the good work of the Child Advocate that we have been presented with a document that she has tabled in this legislature and made members and the entire province aware of as far as the children in foster care and some of the problems resulting from the policies and the lack of following procedures that the minister has set forward and how that has affected many of the children in the province.

(1615)

It was a scathing report and I think all members of the legislature will recognize that. However, I'm hoping that some of the amendments that are put forward here in this Act are not going to be inhibiting either the Child Advocate or the Ombudsman from doing their work entirely. And I also am sincerely hoping that the Child Advocate and the Ombudsman can continue to work as independent officers of the Legislative Assembly rather than — as they would be I'm sure really worried about — rather than them working for the government or the cabinet of the day in any way or form.

What has been placed in this Act that makes me believe that might be the case or there certainly will be some allowance for that is that there is a statement of removing a provision allowing the Lieutenant Governor in Council to assign duties or functions to the Children's Advocate. The fact is, Mr. Deputy Chair, that the Lieutenant Governor in Council, meaning the Premier and his cabinet, should not be the people that are assigning duties or functions to the Children's Advocate. Those functions or duties should be assigned by the entire Legislative Assembly.

And if there is some dispute on whether or not the Children's Advocate should be indulging in different duties, I think then it's up to the minister responsible to enter into debate in the House or to have a committee of the Legislative Assembly discuss whether or not those duties are necessary or not for the public that are concerned about children.

Mr. Deputy Chair, I sort of, in a sense, almost take offence with one of the amendments that speaks about the Children's Advocate, the likelihood or the fact that she may be able to be removed from her office for matters of misconduct or incompetence.

I mean we have to ask who judges the Ombudsman and the Child Advocate? I don't believe it's up to the Lieutenant Governor in Council, who is the cabinet, and the Premier, to be determining whether or not the Child Advocate is competent or not. Is it going to be the Assembly who is going to determine that? Who is it going to be that's going to determine that? That's what's important. Those are the questions that we would

like to ask in Committee of the Whole.

Another concern that my colleagues and I have, Mr. Deputy Chair, regarding these amendments is whether or not they're going to lead to the government of the day directing the Child Advocate or the Ombudsman on what kind of matters they can report and to what extent they can report to the Assembly. And we would certainly need assurance for all the members of the Assembly that any report put forth by the Child Advocate or the Ombudsman be presented in its entirety to all members of the Legislative Assembly, and that the members here be assured that there is no deletions or additions to any said reports by the minister or his cabinet.

One other notation that I made, Mr. Deputy Chair, is that it appears to me that . . . or it states here actually that presently the Child Advocate's salary is set at 85 per cent of the Ombudsman's salary. And I just found that quite interesting. I wasn't aware of that prior to this and I'm wondering why 85 per cent of the Ombudsman's salary is what the Child Advocate gets. I'm wondering how that decision was made and just why that was made. It seems to me that those salaries should be on par. And so that's one of the questions that I certainly think that would be important in putting forward.

I have some other concerns and so do my colleagues regarding quite a few of the issues that are pertinent to the amendments in this Act and so I would adjourn debate at this time, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 27

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

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to respond to this adjourned debate on The Certified Management Accountants Act. One of the fortunate things in our procedure is that adjourned debates allows us an opportunity to be able to confer with some of the professionals in their association . . . confer with a lot of people.

And this time has been well spent because we find that there's a lot of things in this Act that I think is both commendable and certainly we can support. There's a couple of things that I would like to add in terms of caution, or a red flag as I see it. And then I think we'll get to more detail once we get to committee.

But from what I see in this Act and from the responses we've had from some professional organizations, this is particularly a rewriting of this whole governance of management accountants. The first rewriting was a way back in 1978. So things have changed, and we're pleased that some of these amendments came forward.

Some of these professional Bills that have come forward in the past have often maybe not been researched far enough, have not been . . . we've not have the opportunity to discuss them with

some of the professional organizations. And I think they came up lacking and there was some problems that had to be solved later. And I think that that is an important aspect and we've had this opportunity to do that.

Since we've contacted many of the professional organizations with regards to accounting, we've found that there has been a great deal of support. And I have with me, Mr. Deputy Speaker, some letters from the certified . . . regarding certified management accounting Act, the one we're talking about here. And this is a letter of support from the CMA association and that is Betty Hoffart, president of that association, has given support. And I think that that's important as well.

The chartered accountants of Saskatchewan have responded likewise saying that the provisions in this amendment are substantively the right direction. And this is from the chief executive officer, Nola Joorisity. I think that's an important letter that we have.

I also have a letter in response from a chartered accountant corporation from my hometown that I asked to review this too. And the response from this accountant is that they have no objections to the kind of things in this particular . . . the amendments, and so I think that's really important.

One of the things that I feel really strongly about is we get this concurrence from these professional colleagues reviewing their own Act. And I guess reading some of the debate and points that went on forward, I wanted to reiterate a bit some of the concerns that my colleague from Last Mountain-Touchwood expressed about certainly the earlier legislation that seemed to have come up a bit short in the professional engineering field for instance. That was one problem.

The other problem is the membership of this particular association. It's not clear in here what the conditions are for membership into the professional council. I'm sure that that will be elaborated with the regulations, and certainly when we get into Committee of the Whole we'll be able to discuss that a wee bit further. Who is going to set these conditions for membership?

And I also noticed, and I think very positively, that there will be a public member selected to be part of the professional council. And I commend the amendment to allow that. It doesn't say . . . it's not very explicit as to who is going to select that member, that public member. Who is going to do it? How it will be selected? And I'm just wondering — and this is a caution — is this going to be just another opportunity for the government to make another appointment into these organizations?

However, those kind of questions we'll get into, I'm sure, when we get into the Committee of the Whole.

The other caution that I would have before we move this along, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the immunity aspect of the legislation that is put forward. I notice that there is immunity legislation included and, of course, that will certainly apply to the council and the people that are involved in administering this professional Act.

I think that's an important concern. It's very much of a concern

in today's world when we're talking about immunity allowed for certain members of boards of directors, and immunity in other aspects such as Crown corporations and so on.

I wanted to just make a comparison to the immunity that I think is so necessary. We requested some debate, and in fact a motion on immunity for community firefighters, particularly focusing on some of the problems that might be perceived in the Swift Current area. And we haven't been allowed to get that legislation forward. But the immunity principle is very critical in all areas, this being one of them.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would say that because we've had the opportunity now to confer with some of the professionals, we've had opportunity to confer with people that we know personally, and having a chance to review this, I think we can now move on into second reading and I would have no trouble in allowing this to move on, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

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

Bill No. 31

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 31 — The Police Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure today to rise today to speak on Bill 31, An Act to amend The Police Act, 1990. As members of our society, probably next to health, the policing, the safety is the most . . . our most concerns. I would imagine everybody's constituency office, mine included, especially urban ones, have been getting a lot of calls on policing issues, on crime issues. Crime rates unfortunately seem to be on the rise, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just talk even on the policing in my constituency. I was in Davidson on the weekend attending a function and there I was talking to a sergeant of the Craik detachment. And he said the following week before that, before this weekend, there was seven break-ins in the town of Davidson — seven break-ins. There was three one night, a few days later another four. That's almost half the businesses in that town were broken into . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . And it is. It is a huge problem. It's everywhere. Just think in the cities if half the businesses were broken into in a week in the cities — imagine the calls you'd be getting to your office over there.

But like I say, it's a huge concern out there and I hope this Bill will address it because the policing issue needs to be addressed out there. It needs to be addressed everywhere in the province of Saskatchewan.

And one of the issues he raised with the detachments out there is they're understaffed. You know, they're understaffed in every detachment. And I'll say under, understaffed for the simple reason is that the Craik detachment is supposed to have four members there. Right now through the summer months, which are the busiest months, they only have three, Mr. Deputy Speaker — only three. They can't even . . .

Outlook is the same way I believe. And I think most of the

detachments that are spread out through the province of Saskatchewan are understaffed to begin with. Even with their full requirement, they're understaffed; but now most of them can't even fill their full requirements on there, Mr. Speaker. And that's why the crime is rising out there.

There's huge frustrations on the people and on the policing end of it. But they can't, they can't even address that problem. You know, they can't even . . . that they're having . . . that they just don't have the manpower to fill it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

(1630)

Some of the members are saying I'm wrong. You don't think crime rate is rising over there? There's just a piece in the paper here today that says in Saskatoon that 1 in 25 households were broken into last year — 1 in 25. You haven't had any calls on that in your constituency in Saskatoon?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Prebble): — Order, order. I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Arm River. And I want to ensure that the member for Arm River has the opportunity to express his views without undue interruption.

So I'd appreciate it if members, especially members on the government side of the House, would try to give the member for Arm River the opportunity to have the full attention of the Assembly.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I totally agree with you that maybe they should just listen for a change — it's something they don't seem to do very much — instead of just talking.

But this piece of legislation I believe deals with special constables, which is, if it helps out there, which is good. But there's also concerns out there with the appointment of special constables. There's the training of them, of that, if they can handle the jobs because in the situations out there things can change very fast. I mean you can get in a situation, then in a snap of the finger it can turn dangerous or deadly. And that's something that I don't know if this Bill addresses.

Another thing is there's concern out there . . . that I've talked to the police forces that maybe . . . that they're going to phase out or put some of the policing costs to the RMs. That's another burden that's put on them. And also, would that mean that they would be looking at closing RCMP detachments?

I know towns out there already, Mr. Speaker, have special police forces or have their own police force. But there is usually a RCMP member that's stationed in that town or detachment that's very, very close so that if there is trouble, he usually has backup. But if things change, where his backup is maybe 50 miles away, he has to handle that situation himself.

And I don't know. I'm hoping that with this Bill and if they bring this in, that that will address the concerns, that the people that are putting out there will have the ability and the training to handle any situation . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Okay, well that's . . . The member's saying that they do. Well this is what we like to check. And also would like to check with my local RCMP officers and the towns to see what the trainings are.

Because in this Bill, all it says is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all this Bill says is that they will be appointed. It doesn't mention training in it — what they've got, what they will have. The real concern is that they will have their training, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they will be able to handle any situation out there. And their concern is that maybe that this government over here isn't introducing privatization of the police force, which this government always says it's against anything privatization.

It's some concerns that we'd just like to address, Mr. Speaker, that we'd like to look at in this Bill. And also I would like to take time to send it out to my local detachments and my local mayors to see what they think of it, see if they agree with it, Mr. Speaker.

Because like you say, policing out there is a huge, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a huge concern out there.

You know what is the exact definition of a special constable? My understanding is that, is someone who has not gone under police training can be deemed a special constable. And I'm not sure on that; maybe afterwards the member opposite will clue me in on it.

But I have some major concerns with this, particularly in times of trouble when things happen very fast out there. Because in a split second, something can turn very, very deadly out there.

I believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a couple instances just recently where the police stopped a couple of vans that were carrying huge amounts of drugs. Now if the RCMP hadn't been around, maybe there would have been gunfire possibly, maybe even death over it.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . Well we hope that with this Bill that they're not planning on closing any detachments out there in the constituency . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well the member opposite is saying, we're not, and I hope he's not. I really hope he's not.

I'm just raising concerns, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that have been relayed to me. I'm relaying them to this House, and I hope he will take them into consideration. That is our job over here — to raise concerns here.

Because like I say, we're stretched very thin, especially in my constituency. No. 11 Highway, through the summer months, there is a lot of break-ins. You take with Elbow, with parks and the boating there on weekends, there's a lot of people come to the parks. And there's a lot of drinking and there is . . . they are very busy.

In fact, what Dave said to us is that we need more money. This government has to put more money into policing. And that's something that we've agreed on here on this side of the House constantly, that say there has to be more money put into policing. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill addresses it.

But like I say, there is other concerns that I would like to raise. And my colleagues, I believe, will have other concerns they would like to talk about. So I move at this time to adjourn debate on Bill 31.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 32

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It won't take long, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We've had a number of occasions to speak on this Bill. I should say though, that right off the get-go, that we're very happy to actually see that there is one pension plan in this province that is actually funded — in fact, even has a surplus.

I would think we'd have many more questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it happened to be say the teachers' superannuation plan or the public service superannuation plan.

I'd like to just take a minute and read a quote out of *The Leader-Post*, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think it was at the end of May talking about these pension plans. And I quote:

According to the report, the government will need (and this is the Provincial Auditor talking) to spend \$10 billion from 2000 to 2025 to provide pensions promised under several public-sector plans.

He goes on to say:

(And) Among the pension plans with unfunded liabilities are the Teachers' Superannuation Plan, (the one I talked about before), the Public Service Superannuation Plan, and the Liquor Board Superannuation Plan.

The report states that the government will require \$400 million to pay for the teachers' and public service pensions by 2011 and \$500 million by (the year) 2020.

I guess where my concern is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that within the next short time, possibly the next two or three years, we know and they know on the other side that the government will be changing, and it will be people on this side that will have to be honouring these pension plans where the shortfall has arisen while these people were in power.

And I guess, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what will be happening at that time, take the highways we'll have to fix that have been ran in the ground to this point by this government. All the things — health care, education. We have teachers voting on a strike right now. Probably I'm sure many of them are very aware about this unfunded pension plan for teachers, but if they aren't I thought it was my duty to bring it to their attention.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this municipal pension plan that we have talked about that is adequately funded, and the employees that I've talked to out there are very pleased to see the contents of this Bill. A number of cases where it'll bring early retirement into a lower age down the road. There's a number of things.

I know that RM administrators out there and town administrators that I've talked to because of the forced

amalgamation that the Minister of Municipal Government was running around with trying to promote, they were very concerned about their pension plan. Because I know a number of them thought they were probably going to be out of work and were going to have to take advantage of their pension plan.

So with that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, being that I think we have had ample time to speak on this Bill and have other questions that we feel can be answered in committee, that at this time I would let it pass on to committee.

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

Bill No. 38

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 38 — The Electronic Information and Documents Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with pleasure that I engage in second reading debate on Bill No. 38, The Electronic Information and Documents Act, 2000.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, few in this House or across the province would argue that the whole electronic explosion that's happened across the province — the advent of the Internet in particular — has had dramatic implications on the people of the province and government itself. And, Mr. Speaker, it's important that we talk about some of these issues in some detail because I think it's important to understand the implications of what they have.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's important to understand that the whole Internet and the whole way that the Internet and e-commerce is exploding around the world has major implications for the people of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the most fundamental issues that come to mind in regard to this whole explosion of electronic information is the issue surrounding privacy. And of course what is also happening in an increased way is that commerce is conducted in much more of a dramatic way across the Internet, and things like the confidentiality of credit card numbers, PIC (personal identification code) numbers, and things of that nature are extremely important that this be done appropriately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is always of great concern that this whole Internet transaction and Internet commerce raises issues over and above what might seem obvious.

There are issues in regard to taxation and the ability for any jurisdiction to impose their tax regime on someone who is shopping on the Internet countries and continents away and can that be something that a local jurisdiction has authority over.

There are issues surrounding pornography and the appropriateness of people to have access actually to certain Web sites and things of that nature. They're all very important issues.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe in reading what the

minister said when this was introduced that there is some work happening at the international level through the United Nations to try to establish some protocol that governments are challenged to live up to. And I believe that the minister indicated that the intent of this legislation is to respond from Saskatchewan's point of view and perspective to the challenges and issues that are surrounding this from the international level.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as well there is the issue surrounding the appropriateness of legal documents once they are transmitted electronically. The past practice has always been to use, you know, manual documents that are either transferred in person or by courier, but a physical transfer of an exact document. Now faxes and electronic messaging are very commonplace and so there has to be a protocol to surround that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are certainly a number of issues surrounding these issues that have been raised in regard to this whole technical type of universe that we're in. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the official opposition has no problem and objection to the general thrust of this legislation, and we believe that there are many technical questions that need answering. And certainly it's my opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that those questions can be appropriately dealt with when we have more of the technical support and experts that are available to assist the minister in providing a lot of that kind of information.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that, in general, we're supportive of this legislation. We're very much concerned that it respects the issues of privacy and confidentiality. And we are expecting that the government has those issues in mind as well, and we look forward to asking some very technical questions when this legislation comes to committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The Assembly adjourned at 4:46 p.m.