

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today to present again to keep the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. Mr. Speaker:

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

The people who have signed this petition are from Lanigan, Drake, Saskatoon, and Meacham.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the future of their health care facilities. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners may 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 are all from Gordon MacMurchy's home town of Semans.

I so present.

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

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 petition I present is signed by people from the community of Viscount.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition in regards to people concerned with 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 the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals remain open.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by folks from the community of Lanigan.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan 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 Elstow, Colonsay, and Allan.

I so present. Thank you.

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

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

And this is signed by persons from Lanigan, Leroy, Drake, and Humboldt.

I so present.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions to present from concerned people in Saskatchewan about the possibility of 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 signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Lanigan and the city of Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition regarding hospital closures. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners will ever pray that the 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 by people in the Plunkett, Lanigan, Saskatoon, and Jansen areas.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also would like to present a petition from 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 necessary steps to ensure the Lanigan

and Watrous hospitals remain open.

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

Signed by the good people from Young, Saskatchewan.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition 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.

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

The petitioners are from the communities of Guernsey, Lanigan, Viscount, and Plunkett.

I so present.

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

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

And the signatures on this petition are from Colonsay.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with possible municipal amalgamation. And the prayer reads:

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Coderre, Mossbank, and Courval.

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 on the following matters:

The amalgamation of municipalities;

Cellular service in Prud'homme, Bruno, Vonda, and Cudworth;

Keeping the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals open; and

Restoring the Paddockwood access road.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Communication First Report

Deputy Clerk: — Mr. Speaker, Chair of the Standing Committee on Communication presents the first report of the said committee which is as follows:

Your committee has considered the recommendations of the Public Documents Committee under The Archives Act contained in retention and disposal schedules comprising sessional paper no. 219, including schedule no. 341 — capital pension plan; schedule no. 342 — Saskatchewan Health, drug plan and extended benefits; schedule no. 343 — Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, lands branch for this first session of the twenty-fourth legislature and referred to the committee by the Assembly on May 9, 2000.

Your committee recommends to the Assembly that the recommendations of the Public Documents Committee on schedules nos. 341 through 343 be accepted.

Your committee considered the issue of its role in the review and approval of retention disposal schedules. The committee makes the following recommendation to the Legislative Assembly:

That The Archives Act be amended so that retention and disposal schedule recommendations, made under the authority of section 11 of the said Act, may be approved without reference to the Standing Committee on Communication; and further,

That the government take into consideration, when amending The Archives Act, that provision be made so that said schedules continue to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly and that the Speaker be the final authority on the approval of retention and disposal schedules.

It is your committee's intention to revisit the legislative review process of retention and disposal schedules in three years time if The Archives Act is amended to reflect the recommendations of this report.

Your committee reviewed the report of the Legislative Library for the period ended March 31, 1998, and your committee also considered issues related to the broadcast of legislative proceedings. Your committee has directed the director of broadcast services to investigate and make proposals with respect to increasing the accessibility of the broadcast of legislative proceedings through the services of the Saskatchewan Communications Network and by other means.

Signed Hon. Ron Osika, Committee Chair.

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by

the hon. member for Cannington:

That the first report of the Standing Committee on Communication be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of questions I would like to present this morning, so I give notice that I shall on day no. 65 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Post-Secondary Education: what is your department doing to correct the discrepancy between the tuition charged by SIAST Saskatoon versus that charged by SIAST in Prince Albert for the chemical dependency worker program?

To the Minister of Education: how many complaints have been lodged regarding the mould in Dalmeny school; and what are the plans for getting rid of that particular mould in Dalmeny school?

To the Minister of Environment: has your department studied whether or not to make beer bottles mandatory as a way to reduce incidents of broken glass?

To the Minister of Highways: what is your department's plan to fix the railway crossing on Highway 12 north of Martensville?

To the Minister of Highways: has your department conducted a safety study regarding the intersection of Highway 305 and the Dalmeny access road; if so, when will it be released; and if not, when will such a study be done?

And of great import, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day 65 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: what is a musical pumpjack?

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 65 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: has your department looked into taking the necessary steps required for the production of organic milk in Saskatchewan since we currently import it from other provinces?

And the second question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: has your department looked into a program similar to one in British Columbia known as the cottage industry program which access a speciality pool of milk quota for organic milk from the federal government?

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 65 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming Authority: what is the province's share in the profit generated by Lotto 6/49 and what criteria are used to determine which provincial projects will benefit from those profits?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that it's my great honour to introduce to you and to the members of the Legislative Assembly, a truly special visitor to our province. In your gallery is His Excellency Sir Anthony Goodenough, the High Commissioner of Britain to Canada, accompanied by Mr. Alan Campbell, the head of the political section of the British High Commission in Ottawa. I'll ask them to stand in just a few moments.

His Excellency is a distinguished diplomat who represented Her Majesty and the people of Great Britain in Ghana, Pakistan, France, and Greece. He served as assistant undersecretary for Commonwealth and African affairs before being appointed as High Commissioner to Canada in 1996. And in 1997 he was made a knight commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George, which is the order reserved for the diplomatic service.

His Excellency's term as High Commissioner will conclude shortly and he's visiting Saskatchewan as part of a farewell tour of Western Canada. But always at work, it's a very full schedule he has including meetings with Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, colleagues in Finance and Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. Also I'll be meeting him this afternoon in my office where we'll be able to witness and hear the musical pumpjack.

This evening His Excellency will be the guest at a dinner hosted by Mr. Speaker, to be attended by some members of the House, government officials, and representatives of the business, education, and British communities.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has enjoyed a long and mutually beneficial relationship with the United Kingdom, which is our fifth-largest European trading partner. We look forward to working with the British government on matters of mutual concern and interest so that we might build upon that solid foundation.

And of course, before I take my place, I'd be very remiss while on my feet if I didn't mention the fact that we have a very long and proud tradition of British parliamentary democracy — we celebrate it, Mr. Speaker, at your Commonwealth Parliamentary Association annual meeting. Democracy which is in many ways Britain's greatest gift, not only to Saskatchewan to Canada but to the Commonwealth nations — and to democracy itself.

The American, Alexander Hamilton, one of the so-called founding fathers of the United States, believed that that new nation should adopt the British parliamentary system. And he said, "The British government forms the best model the world has ever produced." The British government, in the words of

Hamilton.

Well history tells us that Hamilton's colleagues decided not to follow his advice and history shall judge the merits of his decision.

But as far as I'm concerned, we in Canada and in this House are very proud that we have built our own democratic government by following the example of, in the words of Hamilton, the best model — rightly called the Mother of all Parliaments.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and the people of this province, I want to wish His Excellency Sir Anthony all the best in his future endeavours. And I would invite His Excellency and Mr. Campbell to now rise and accept the heartfelt greetings and best wishes of you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of this Chamber.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege, on behalf of the Leader of the Official Opposition and our caucus, to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency Sir Anthony Goodenough to our Assembly this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to have representatives from other countries to come and visit our Assembly. And I look forward as well to having a meeting with His Excellency a little later this afternoon.

So I again ask all members to extend a warm welcome to His Excellency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this House some long-time friends, Dave, Yvonne, and Mykola Kyba who are up in the west wing. A wonderfully trilingual family.

And to the family I would say in my best Ukrainian, Vitaemo; in French, Bienvenue; and in English, welcome to this House. And I would ask all to join me in welcoming them. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wartman: — And also I would like to welcome to this House and introduce to you and through you to this House, a new friend Kathleen Hewitt. I worked with Kathleen's mother on the Regina presbytery of the United Church. And Kathleen is also in the west balcony.

She is the executive director for the gay and lesbian community association of Regina. And I would ask all to welcome Kathleen here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly, sitting in the east gallery, 32 grade 5 and 6 kids from the Wild Rose School of Shellbrook and their teachers: Mrs. Sharon Kilmer, Mrs. Merle Roberts, Mrs. Ruth Peake;

chaperons; Mr. Pletz, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Oleksyn, Mrs. Herdin, and Carla Burgess.

And I look forward to speaking to you later on after the session. I would like the members all to welcome them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with my colleague in welcoming Kathleen Hewitt to the legislature today.

Kathleen and I met when she was a shop steward with Silver Sage Casino during the Casino Regina discussions. And I have become closer friends since then, because I found her to be a person of good humour, mixed with determination.

So I just again ask everybody to welcome her today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Trans Canada Relay

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, it's my distinct pleasure this afternoon to stand in this Assembly and pay tribute to a group of people who have worked so diligently in the passing of the waters in the Trans Canada Relay through our area.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about the passing of the waters — and the members opposite are wondering exactly what this is and I guess we'll maybe leave them in limbo for a while — but what this relay is, Relay 2000 is an effort to bring to the attention of all Canadians, the Trans Canada Trail.

And what we had this on Sunday morning was the recognition of a sample of water from the Pacific and the Arctic oceans which passed through our area and will meet up with a sample of water from the Atlantic Ocean in Hull, Quebec in September signifying unification of our country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, at the little community of Ellisboro where there will be a pavilion erected to recognize the Trans Canada Trail in this province, Mr. Gordon Dunn, 91 years young, proudly brought into the ceremony — and travelled the last kilometre of the trail — the waters and passed them on to Connor Tubman who was seven years old, and he began the passage on from the community of Ellisboro.

So, Mr. Speaker, I extend congratulations to all those involved.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Day of Warning for Medicare

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today has been a good day for medicare in Saskatchewan. This morning our Premier announced a provincial health care review aimed at providing a new vision for publicly administered health care in Saskatchewan.

And at noon today, people from across the country participated

in a National Day of Warning Against the Privatization of Health Care. This event was organized by the four largest health care unions, representing health care workers across Canada.

Recent attacks on our health care system have caused concern amongst the public. From the federal government's reduction in transfer payments to the introduction of Bill 11 in Alberta, the future of health care has been on many people's minds.

And today people across this province and across the whole country have said no to privatized health care, just as they did in the recent Alberta by-election.

In Saskatchewan, citizens of Weyburn, Regina, Humboldt, Saskatoon, Davidson, Biggar, Rosetown, and many more came out to support our health care system. I attended the event in Regina today and can tell you that the participants feel that it is imperative that we pressure Ottawa to restore funding and that we continue to fight against private health care.

We must be ever vigilant against those who call for the privatization of health services. I, as my button says, am on medicare alert and I urge all members to be on alert as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

High School Debate on Privatization of Medicare

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, last week I had the honour of attending a debate by the grade 11 economic class in Porcupine Plain composite High School. The debate topic was simple and timely: be it resolved medicare be privatized.

Mr. Speaker, these young students had researched both sides of the topic very well. They presented their arguments with passion and enthusiasm.

The pro-privatization side used arguments like, it's a denial of my civil liberties, what's so evil about spending one's own money on one's own health; and to describe Canada's health care as the best in the world is patriotic but untrue.

The con side, against privatization, argued that private health care would lure the best professionals away, that it would set up a class system separated by money, and that in the UK (United Kingdom) the number of private hospitals was decreasing.

Mr. Speaker, the statement that most of us remember was from one young man who talked about Tommy Douglas and his vision, and he said, that struck me right in the heart and made me proud to be a Canadian.

Mr. Speaker, it was a well-fought battle but the argument put forward by the side determined to privatize medicare won. For your information, Mr. Speaker, I wasn't one of the judges.

I'd like to congratulate the students and teachers for their work and their enthusiasm. I believe this province will be in good hands when we turn the control of the province over to the students in Saskatchewan today.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canada-Saskatchewan Adjustment Program

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the Assembly to tell the members about a success story. It's about the Canada-Saskatchewan Adjustment Program (CSAP).

It is a success story on two fronts. First, the Government of Saskatchewan was able to secure federal funding for this program when people had given up hope of federal action. This is due in no small part to the efforts of Saskatchewan farmers and the farm coalition.

Second, we got the funds in the pockets of farmers in a timely and efficient fashion. When we announced the program, we said the funds would be in farmers' pockets for spring seeding and it was.

I ask the members to look at the facts of this program. Over 25,000 cheques for \$107 million were mailed out by May 1, 2000. By May 15, nearly 40,000 cheques for \$163 million were sent to farmers. The latest numbers indicate that almost 46,500 farmers received just over \$190 million in payouts — an average initial payment of just over \$4,000 per producer. A total of \$260 million will be paid out to farmers, with the final payment calculation after June 30 deadline.

This happened because Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has a designated group of employees who, in addition to operating the crop insurance program, delivered CSAP.

I want to tell the members of the Assembly that I will be sending a letter to each and every employee of Saskatchewan Crop Insurance, and thanking each and every one of them for . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

International Grain Council

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you will know that for the next three days Regina is the host of an international conference on grain. Delegates from around the world will be discussing issues about subsidies, world trade discussion, and investment opportunities.

I'm sure all farmers here in Saskatchewan would want to welcome the delegates, and sincerely hope that the discussions will be beneficial to all. International trade subsidies have resulted in record-low grain prices, so any discussion in this area of reducing export subsidies worldwide would indeed be helpful to our farm community. Saskatchewan and indeed all Canadian farmers are at a significant disadvantage, and without trade liberalization the future remains difficult for our farm families.

This is the first time this international event has been hosted in North America, Mr. Speaker, and we welcome all delegates to Saskatchewan. Congratulations to all who worked to organize and host this very important event on the future of the grain industry worldwide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While I am no farmer, I want to join with other members in welcoming to Regina and to Saskatchewan the members of the International Grain Council. The 500 delegates from 40 countries are meeting here for the next three days, and it goes without saying that their deliberations are extremely important to Saskatchewan's number one industry.

As an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Regina, it goes without saying, that I'm also extremely pleased to have 500 visitors join us here in this beautiful Queen city of ours.

Mr. Speaker, while it is unusual for members of this Assembly to say kind words about the efforts of ministers Goodale and Vanclief, I do want to acknowledge their effort in helping bring this conference to our city. This conference, as you know, is usually held in London, and it is fact a very great honour to have it in North America and especially here in the heart of our grain belt.

This conference provides an opportunity to showcase our grains industry to the world, as well as presenting opportunities for other agri-business for greater sales and investment. It also gives us the opportunity to discuss the problem of international grain subsidies.

Mr. Speaker, the fact the IGC (International Grain Council) conference is being held here is a recognition of Saskatchewan's important place in this very important global industry. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Letter Regarding Highway No. 42

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have before me a letter dated June 8 from a Dr. Robert Hamilton of Regina in which he states:

I'm writing to bring the deplorable state of Highway 42 to your attention. On the May long weekend, my family and I were travelling to Palliser Regional Park, pulling our boat, when we hit what can only be described as a crater. It was at least 8 feet long, 4 feet wide, and 8 to 12 inches deep. Our trailer bounced off the hitch, breaking the security pin and snapping the metal safety chain. It was really a miracle that our family was spared any serious injury.

As we continued our trip, we made a game of counting potholes. Between the town of Eyebrow and Keeler we counted 313 major potholes and 13 stretches of thick layers of dangerous gravel had been spread on the road. I found it very difficult to maintain control of our vehicle when I hit these patches.

We passed one sign which read, broken pavement 5 kilometres. But when that 5-kilometre stretch ended, we were confronted with another identical sign followed by a third sign indicating a further 10-kilometre stretch of broken highway ahead.

I contacted Highway officials who were courteous but not very helpful. They proposed a theory that increases in grain transportation accounted for the deterioration of this road. I was told that the problem could be resolved by allowing deteriorating sections of the road to return to gravel.

Certainly grain traffic has increased; however, I believe the Highways Department is mistaken in the assumption that this is the only cause.

And he concludes by saying:

I strongly urge the government to instruct the Highways Department to rethink plans for Highway 42 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member's time has expired.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Trew: — To make a member's statement.

The Speaker: — Time has expired for member's statements. And hon. members, I would just like to remind all of you that today is Wednesday.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Review of Health Care System Announced

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all knew it was Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, it's about time. The Saskatchewan Party has been calling for a complete review of the health care system for almost two years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — And we need a full review because nine years of disastrous NDP (New Democratic Party) mismanagement of health care.

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's health care system is on the brink of failure and a lot of people are telling us it's already failed them.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier's system is soaking up public funds like a sponge. People are spending more and more time on waiting lists. Communities are worried about where they will go even to get health care.

Mr. Premier, will you admit today that while your health care review is two years late, it's an indictment of the failure of the system you're responsible for?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to the question is no, because it is not an indictment of our system.

And I want to add specifically to the hon. member the farthest thing that we have done is from the suggestion and the advocacy of the position of your party. Your party in the last election campaign wanted, quote — I'm reading from their campaign literature; this is right from their platform — "the Provincial Auditor to launch a comprehensive value-for-money audit of the health care system." Value for audit.

That's what they want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Now, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And they applaud that.

What they're telling the people of Saskatchewan is they're going to have an accountant over every nurse's shoulder, they're going to have an accountant over every doctor's shoulder, they're going to have an accountant over every LPN (licensed practical nurse).

And you know what they're going to do? They're going to advocate the privatization of health care.

And while I'm on my feet, it is incorrect for you to suggest that there will be hospital closures pending this review. There will be none. We're for medicare; you're against medicare.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again to the Premier. Well it's a little late to be arguing about how the wellness model is working and how wonderful everything is, because it isn't. It's a disaster under your administration. The health care system is a failure, and the reality is you had no choice, Mr. Premier, but to call this review.

Mr. Premier, the Saskatchewan Party fully supports a health care review. We've been saying it for two years and you come along johnny-come-lately and finally catch on. But more importantly, Mr. Premier, while this review is taking place, will you put a moratorium on further closures of facilities in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I already said in answer to the first question posed to me by the member opposite that no hospitals will be closed while this review is going on. I said that there . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I said at my press conference, that does not mean that there'll be no changes to the system. Obviously the system has to continue. But there will be no hospital closures. The system can't stand still.

But I want to say something else. We are not . . . for the

position that you're in. Your leader, the Leader of the Opposition, says the following, quote:

Ottawa should hold back on more cash in the province of Saskatchewan (until what?) until the Government of Saskatchewan has a value for audit system . . .

A value audit system, the Texas-style system that you're advocating.

So he says to Ottawa, don't advance any money to Saskatchewan. Make the difficulty even worse and then have an auditor overlooking every nurse's shoulder.

Shame on you. You want to privatize medicare. We . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, these words coming from the great defender of the Canada Health Act and medicare.

Mr. Speaker, all the time we see this Premier stand up in this province and wrap himself in the mantle of the Canada Health Act. According to your press release, you pledge your allegiance to the five principles of the Canada Health Act and yet not three months ago you gave a speech in Ottawa in which you said, and I quote:

The current preoccupation with the Canada Health Act may be counterproductive as we build a public health care system for this new century.

And you went on to say that the Canada Health Act is a, quote:

. . . a relatively minor part of the story.

Mr. Premier, is that your position, that the principles of the Canada Health Act are counterproductive and a relatively minor part of the story? Or are you out there saying one thing in Ottawa while you're flogging your resumé and sucking up for an appointment? Or what are you saying in this . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. I just ask all hon. members to be respectful of one another.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I don't expect very much more from the hon. member from Melfort. He has such a wonderful way with words and he's such a civil and decent debater. But I'll tell you, knowing where he comes from, putting him in charge of the health care system is like putting Colonel Sanders in charge of the chicken coop. And that particularly applies to him.

And when I said . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — And when I said, and when I said in Ottawa that we shouldn't only focus on the Canada Health Act,

I mean that. I mean that we move beyond the minimum standards of the Canada Health Act that we support, on to a new and additional system that complements the Canada Health Act — a wellness model.

And what I mean also by that is we are opposed to a private health care system that the member from Weyburn advocates, that your candidate down in Wood River advocates, Mr. Yogi Yogibert, candidate for leader of your . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yogi Huyghebaert. You know what he says, quote, "I'm in favour of private clinics." That's your candidate in Wood River. He's for privatization. We're against it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Premier. Well obviously he must have hit a nerve, and the resumes aren't getting peddled around very well because you're not getting any jobs.

Why are you inconsistent about your words in Ottawa which you are in Saskatchewan. On March 31, you told a public policy forum in Ottawa, and I quote, you said, "The current preoccupation of the Canada Health Act may be counterproductive." That's a direct quote, Mr. Premier. You're saying one thing in Ottawa while you're telling the people in Saskatchewan another thing.

Mr. Premier, why won't you come clean with the people here and tell them that this commission is something that will cover up the mess that you've made of health care; and indeed, I want them to investigate your violation of the Canada Health Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — I want to tell the hon. member I'm not going lie awake at night thinking that Ottawa is going to be investigating our so-called violation of Canada Health Act because we haven't violated it.

We support the Canada Health Act, and that is exactly our position. But we want to say that in addition to the Canada Health Act, we should be adding on the additional services of wellness and prevention, we're moving on to the Canada Health Act and the reforms we've initiated in the province of Saskatchewan.

But I tell you what we don't support. We don't support Mr. Yogi's comment that he's in favour of private clinics. We don't support the member from Weyburn who says, quote, in the *Weyburn Review*, one option Bakken put forward, and I quote, in the course of her campaign was the privatization of health services. I think that should be an option.

We don't support your value-for-money audit, Texas-style either. I say to everybody who is concerned about the protection of medicare for the 21st century, there's only one party that's committed to that defence — that's this coalition government right here, and not your opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, very brave accusatory words but let me ask you, Mr. Premier. The five principles of the

Canada Health Act — universality, what does that mean? Does it mean that there's health care for everyone in this province or only for those that are prepared to wait on waiting lists instead of the ones that can afford to bail out to Alberta or the United States?

Where's portability? Does that mean you have to take your cares out of the rural Saskatchewan into the cities and wait in line there?

Where, Mr. Speaker, are accessibility — why people wait for need of care? Where's comprehensiveness?

The only thing you got is administration, while you sit there and soak up public funds without being willing to look at it.

Mr. Premier, you're in violation of the Canada Health Act and I hope this commission will cite you for it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this comes from the so-called Health critic of the so-called Saskatchewan Party which advocates a five-year freeze on health spending, a five-year . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A five-year freeze on health care spending. That's your position. An audit, value-for-money audit. We're going to have the accountants overlooking the nurses when . . . (inaudible) . . . work. Those who support Alberta and Bill 11, those who support the privatization of the health care system, the member from Weyburn, the candidate down in Wood River.

I tell you this party opposite — and I warn the people of Saskatchewan — this party opposite is a wolf in sheep's clothing. This is a party which is a wolf which will destroy medicare.

We dream medicare for the 21st century. We dare to be bold. We invented medicare. This coalition government is determined to protect it, notwithstanding your best efforts at destruction. They can't be trusted. Only this coalition government can be trusted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I think we'll find out soon enough whether the people of Wood River believe in the NDP's system of health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, this morning your government announced that Ken Fyke will head the health care commission. And I understand that Mr. Fyke is a well-regarded health administrator.

However, you will forgive the people of Saskatchewan if they are just a little cynical about the NDP's commitment to a fully

independent review. Just look at the massive government interference in Channel Lake inquiry, the no-fault insurance review, and the review of the CCTA (Crown Construction Tendering Agreement).

Madam Minister, does the NDP intend to appoint more members to the commission? If so, will you release their names and professional background today, and will you make the commitment to keep NDP politics out of the work of the commission?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this question comes from the member who believes in privatization. This question comes from the member who believes in the privatization of medicare. This question comes from the member and . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, this question comes from the member and the party that believes in privatization in medicare.

From the Health critic the earlier question was, when he asked about the principles of the Canada Health Act — what they were, what they meant — here's what today's *Leader-Post*, an article by Mr. Murray Mandryk, talks about respecting a convention of the Saskatchewan Party. Quote, and I'm quoting directly here:

Nor were many of the comments coming from the floor the least bit conciliatory to the left referring to their convention. One delegate described the five principles of medicare — universality, portability, accessibility, comprehensive and public administration — as socialist rhetoric.

From your convention. No wonder the hon. member doesn't have the foggiest idea of what the principles of the Canada Health Act are, and no wonder, I say again, you can never trust any Saskatchewan Party member with the defence of medicare, only this coalition government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I have another question to the Minister of Health. Madam Minister, this morning you committed to broad public consultation on the health care review. According to the Premier there will be three reports completed in the course of the review.

The first interim report is due this fall, the second is due at Christmas, and the final report is due next spring.

Madam Minister, will the NDP make these reports public when Mr. Fyke submits them. And will you commit to submit each of the reports without the NDP whitewash that your government applies to most of the information that you do release to the public.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, nominated today was a very distinguished . . . is a very distinguished Canadian who knows the health care system inside and out. Who served two years as deputy minister of Health under the former Devine administration. He served for several years as deputy minister of Health under the Blakeney administration, and has a record of distinguished service and commitment to public health care.

The question asked comes from a member who does not have the commitment to public health care. Her commitment is — and she's nodding in support — her commitment is to privatization. And she would have us believe, she would have us believe that somehow under this chair of this distinguished Canadian committed to the public health care system, that there won't be full revelation and full accountability and full consultation.

I tell you what Mr. Fyke said today at the press conference — very wise words. He said the inspiration for medicare in 1960 came from the hearts and the minds of Saskatchewan people, and he said the solution will come from there — and it will — not from the . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Maintenance of Highway 18

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister of Highways. Mr. Minister, tomorrow the residents of Climax . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. I would ask members on both sides to please come to order. The question will be heard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Tomorrow the residents of Climax are planning to gather on Highway 18 near their community, Mr. Speaker. They're going out to patch some more potholes, just like the people of Val Marie did a week ago.

But unlike the people of Val Marie, residents of Climax are being told that they won't have access to asphalt or oilers. Bill Lowe, the reeve of the RM (rural municipality) of Lone Tree, says, Mr. Minister, that your department doesn't seem interested in assisting them.

He says they're not getting much co-operation from your department, and the people from the community are wondering why they are not being treated the same as the people of Val Marie.

Mr. Minister, you told the media yesterday that Highways department people would be on Highway 18 to make sure the people of Climax are safe during their work. But specifically, will your department be giving these people asphalt and oilers the same as you gave to the people of Val Marie?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member knows very well that we have said publicly, and we have repeatedly said this and are continuing to do this, we will meet with the community of Climax and affected communities along the road, Mr. Speaker. We've committed to

that and we're continuing to do that, Mr. Speaker.

But, Mr. Speaker, the member also knows, and factually, that the two roads that he's referring to are very different surfaces as well, Mr. Speaker. One is a thin membrane surface that is badly broke up; another one, Highway No. 4, was a road where the community worked together to repair a pothole.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a quote from the member from Saltcoats who said the following, Mr. Speaker — if the member from Cypress is opposed to this — the member from Saltcoats says:

Maybe there is a point that we would be better off having them back in gravel (Mr. Speaker) and I don't think I'd probably have many of my constituents agree with me on that at this point, but I honestly feel there must be some point there where we have to give up (Mr. Speaker).

Well, we're not going to give up, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — The member of Saltcoats may have realized also that it was an idea that's impossible to sell. I can't defend his comments.

But, Mr. Speaker, the minister has said his officials will meet with community leaders from Climax on Friday, but those same community leaders say that his officials were supposed to meet with them last Monday but they didn't show up.

Mr. Minister, is that how you treat people with concerns about the state of our highways? The people of Climax believe this section of Highway 18 is salvageable. They don't buy your argument that gravel roads are safer at all and they will not stand for this highway, which they rely on to do business and for daily life, to be reverted to gravel.

Your department, Mr. Minister, has told them to expect no help and then they stand them up for a meeting. Yet you suggest that people will get help and their concerns will be heard.

So, Mr. Minister, do you know what the story is in your department? Who is making the decisions — you or your bureaucrats?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I've made the commitment that we will meet, and we will meet if the community wants to meet with us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from the Saskatchewan Trucking Association. It says the following, Mr. Speaker. They say that:

If gravel surfaces are going to stand up better than . . . thin membrane payment, then I guess that is what we'll have to do in the interim until there is enough funding to put . . . back into pavement.

Mr. Speaker, that member over there acknowledges there needs more funding, as I do, from the federal treasury. But, Mr.

Speaker, on gravel roads — in case the member didn't hear it — the member from Saltcoats says:

Maybe there is a point that we would be better off having them back to gravel and I don't think I'd probably have many of my constituents agree with me on that . . . point, but I honestly feel . . . (that at) some point . . . we have to give up, (Mr. Speaker).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the trucker's association may be willing to live with gravel but the people of Climax and Bracken aren't. The people of Climax don't believe gravel will be safer and they have vowed not to allow your equipment to attack Highway 18.

Gravel doesn't allow for all-weather travel, and stone chips are very common. Sask Tourism might as well print up a bumper sticker that says, I drove through Saskatchewan and all I got were these lousy stone chips.

If gravel roads aren't properly maintained, there are more frequent accidents and a host of other problems for drivers when one suddenly drives from pavement on to gravel.

Mr. Minister, how much will it cost for you to grind up the existing pavement and maintain that surface compared to sending your crews out to patch the existing road surface?

And finally, Mr. Minister, will you patch Highway 18 and work with the community to plan for the future instead of forcing them to take more drastic action?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, the cost is \$700 million a year for interest on their debt, Mr. Speaker. The cost is \$320 million a year on top because they voted in favour of abandonment of the Crow rate, Mr. Speaker. That's what the cost is. Over \$1 billion a year because of the decisions that they made and supported, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in the last four years, Mr. Speaker, we've increased our budget by 49 per cent. And on areas that that member is referring to, Mr. Speaker, in areas of maintenance, we've increased our budget in maintenance by 68 per cent. We know that's not enough, Mr. Speaker, but we're doing the best with the money that we have. We need support from the federal government as well, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teachers' Job Action

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Education.

Mr. Minister, today and tomorrow teachers are taking a strike vote. If they vote to go on strike the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) is now saying the strike could take place before the end of this school year.

Mr. Minister, what plan do you have in place to deal with that possibility? What will you do to ensure that Saskatchewan students are able to complete their school year?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly the teachers federation has called for a sanctions vote which will occur today and tomorrow.

It would be presumptuous of me to determine what the result of that vote would be. But in the eventuality that they are given a mandate to proceed with job action the department as well as the school trustees have had plans and are working on plans to make sure — to make sure — that no student in the province of Saskatchewan will suffer from any job action with regard to the teachers' contract.

And what we are saying is that we are working right now in fact on providing some direction to the department, as well as to school divisions, to make sure primarily for our Grade 12 students that their exams will be marked, that records will be provided, and that they will be able to move on for their credits for their university and post-secondary training.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, yesterday in estimates I asked you the same question six times, and I never did get an answer.

I wanted to know how many school divisions in this province have seen their funding increase enough this year to cover teachers' salary increase of 7.2 per cent and how many will not receive enough to cover this increase. It was a fairly straightforward question, Mr. Minister, and you couldn't give me an answer.

Mr. Minister, you've had a whole day to think about it, and I'm going to try again. How many school divisions will receive enough money to cover a salary increase of 7.2 per cent and how many will not receive enough money to cover that interest?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday when we were doing estimates I answered that question on several occasions. And it's my understanding that perhaps the member opposite doesn't understand the answer so I'll give it to her again.

Certainly, when we talk about the impact, the impact of a teachers' negotiated salary in terms of how this would apply to the foundation operating grant and also to school divisions, what I answered yesterday, what I'm answering here today to the member opposite, is that any amount that will be required to cover a teachers' negotiated contract will be provided by the provincial government on a global basis to the foundation operating grant.

We also recognize that the foundation operating grant is an equalization formula so it is applied. And as I said yesterday, we have school divisions who have assessments of over \$700,000 per student who will receive no grant. They have made . . . They knew the formula. The formula is transparent and they will move on with that information . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, we realize how this formula works. But what I'm saying is you know there's going to be a number of school divisions who will not get enough money.

The question was simple: how many school divisions out there are not going to get money to cover that teacher salary increase? In a global budget means that there will be enough to cover it for everyone, but individual school divisions may not get it. How many are not going to get enough money to cover that teacher salary increase?

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's question indicates a profound lack of understanding of how education is funded in this province.

No school division will suffer because of the arrangements. They have all agreed. All stakeholders have agreed on the formula of the foundation operating grant. The fact of the matter is that some school divisions who have high assessments will receive no grant. But they also know that there will be a negotiated settlement and they will have to recoup that from within their resources. But for them to have massive resources and low mill rates to cover that, of course, that's the way the system works. We have an equalization formula.

And I must remind the member opposite that this has been explained to her on numerous occasions, and I'm just amazed that she has not been able to understand a simple concept of foundation operating grant and equalization. And it's clear to me that the member opposite doesn't . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of an open and accountable government, we are very happy to table the answer to question no. 176.

The Speaker: — The answer to question no. 176 is tabled.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By leave of the Assembly, I would like to table a revised answer to written question no. 171 and ask that the official records be amended as such.

The Speaker: — The Government Deputy Whip has tabled a revised answer to question 171. Is leave granted?

Leave granted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 15

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter the debate with respect to Bill No. 15, An Act to amend The Department of Justice Act.

Mr. Speaker, one of the main principles of the Bill is an attempt to augment the recognition within our justice system of the need for increased cultural sensitivity for First Nations people within our justice system. The Bill addresses that in a number of ways, not the least of which is the extension of protection from liability to Aboriginal courtworkers — in fact to all courtworkers, Mr. Speaker.

But the other issue in this Act bears some, I think, some more questions that need to be asked, and we'll be doing that in Committee of the Whole. And specifically that other issue is the extension of the solicitor-client confidentiality privilege to the relationship between a courtworker and an accused. And that's of course is a very serious and solemn privilege that has wide-ranging implications in terms of our judicial system and in terms of the treatment that the accused can receive in our system. And so we will be asking a number of specific questions regarding that particular provision of Bill 15 in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 16

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

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

Bill No. 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 Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a few brief remarks on this Bill, and we intended to pursue it further in committee as well. A number of my colleagues have spoke to Bill No. 28 and they have outlined some of the concerns that we have, and we'll be looking for clarification of those concerns in Committee of the Whole with the Minister of Justice and his officials.

There are some very significant changes represented in Bill 28. They affect of course both the individual officers that we're talking about, the Child Advocate and the Ombudsman, as it relates specifically to their remuneration and the compensation

that they receive in exchange for the performance of their duties on behalf of taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, the Assembly will know that the current relationship is tied, as it relates to salary and benefits, is tied to the salary and benefits of our provincial court judges, and this Act will make some changes there. And it will place authority, probably rightfully so, with the Board of Internal Economy.

But at the same time it does that, Mr. Speaker, it still provides a number of powers to the cabinet of the government in terms of directing both of these officers. Both the Child Advocate and both the Ombudsman will be under the direction of cabinet. Cabinet has some very specific authorities as laid out in this Bill and yet the Board of Internal Economy is, if you will, Mr. Speaker, cutting the cheques.

And there is maybe a bit of a discrepancy there that we would like to question which we are prepared to do when the Bill is in Committee of the Whole. 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.

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again a number of my colleagues have spoken to this Bill as well, Bill No. 29.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that shortly after I was asked to take on the responsibility as the Justice critic for the official opposition, I had a very good meeting with the Saskatchewan rental housing association. And they outlined a number of concerns as it relates to the current damage deposit process they must go through and various other issues they had with the Rentalsman at the time.

Now I can also confirm to the Assembly that a number of the concerns that they registered with me during that meeting have been addressed in this particular Bill, and quite rightly so I think, Mr. Speaker.

Specifically prior to the changes that are currently in effect with respect to damage deposits and the process in place when there is a dispute between a landlord and a tenant, prior to the change being made, we had a damage deposit that was just fundamentally too low in the province. I think everybody agreed with that. It was a \$125.

I know from firsthand experience, at least through anecdotal evidence provided by my father who has some rental properties, \$125 was simply inadequate for a landlord to continue to provide adequate, and comfortable, and modern, and safe accommodation for people when their properties were damaged by previous tenants.

And so a change was made by the government to increase the level of the damage deposit — this government — Mr. Speaker.

But in some, I guess, in some sort of strange, twisted NDP quid pro quo for this particular change, rental property owners in the province were stuck with a damage deposit process that was extremely cumbersome and was frankly not working for . . . I don't think either for tenants or for landlords.

And the proof is in the pudding, Mr. Speaker, because before these changes were made there were 2,000 security deposit hearings being held . . . or rather, I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker, there were 1,000 security deposit hearings being held — in other words disputes between landlords and tenants. And after the changes were made the number went up to 5,000, Mr. Speaker; 2,000 of the 5,000 were hearings where the tenant didn't bother showing up. And so there were some major flaws with this particular process. This Bill does seek to address them.

We have some concerns about some of the specific ways it goes about addressing them and whether the Bill has gone far enough in alleviating the problem that property owners have had in the province in trying to ensure that we have good accommodations, good rental accommodations and enough rental accommodations for the marketplaces in our . . . across the province.

And we'll get into those questions in committee, Mr. Speaker. And with those remarks, we'll end the second reading debates and look forward to Committee of the Whole. Thank you.

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. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And once again, a number of my colleagues have spoken to Bill No. 31, An Act to amend The Police Act, 1990. And in the course of my duties I've tried to consult with the various stakeholders involved or who will be impacted by this particular Bill.

And I think we have some very specific questions that we would like to ask in committee related to the changes that An Act to amend The Police Act, 1990 is proposing.

One of the areas that I think that we will want to be touching on in committee — and I'll do that very, very briefly at this time, Mr. Speaker — is the impact of the Act on the current and future special constable provisions in our province, in the province of Saskatchewan.

And special constables — I think, Mr. Speaker, you would agree with your first-hand knowledge, I think members of the Assembly would agree — special constables can be a very useful tool to municipal police forces; and certainly for the mounted police force, which is the city detachment I'm most familiar with in the city of Swift Current, where their own program has been very successful frankly and well-received by both the community, the regular force members, as well as those who have the privilege of serving as special constables with the mounted police which, as I say, is the force I'm

familiar with.

A number of other communities that have municipal forces have special constables in place. But, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill does not do, what this Bill does not do is extend that privilege, extend that very useful asset a community could have to a number of communities who have chosen to have municipal police forces, very small communities.

Some of the examples of those, Mr. Speaker, are Watson, Luseland, Churchbridge, Cudworth, and Caronport. These communities have single-person detachments but they are municipal detachments.

The situation that we have in our province currently, Mr. Speaker, is such that special constables can only operate . . . can only offer their services and be an asset in communities where they are under the full-time and direct supervision of a regular force member, be it a municipal force or the mounted police.

And I think, Mr. Speaker, these communities and other communities, who choose to go to single member or single-member forces in their communities, the concern that they have is that the special constable asset, as it were, is simply unavailable to them as a result. Because if, for example, they would like to utilize a special constable to relieve their regular member, who may need to take a holiday or may need to attend to sickness, or whatever reason that that regular member may have, the special constable tool is simply not available to them as it is to other people . . . other municipalities in the province — cities and larger towns that have multimember forces, be they municipal or be they with the mounted police.

And I think these are some of the questions . . . We'd like to ask some questions surrounding that specifically in Committee of the Whole. The member for Regina Elphinstone will be happy to know we're going to do that in Committee of the Whole.

They're good questions, Mr. Speaker, because I think if we all agree that there are benefits to having special constables as assets in these communities, then they should be available to every community, whether they have a single-member municipal detachment of their own force or not. And that's the questions that we will be asking in Committee of the Whole. 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.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1999

The Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I'll invite the Hon. Minister of Finance to introduce his official.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have with me today sitting to my left, Mr. Brian Smith, who is the executive director of the Public Employees Benefit Agency.

Clause 1

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your official once again. I just have a couple of short questions and then we'll get on with this particular Act.

I noticed that the Saskatchewan Pension Plan has been in operation for a long time. And in fact, it's one of the few opportunities for Saskatchewan people to invest in a pension plan that is really outside of the RS . . . (inaudible) . . . RSP (Retirement Savings Plan).

So, I guess my question is that some of these amendments allow for a charge of fees. My question is, what services will you be charging a fee for in regards to this pension plan?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The commission does not presently contemplate charging any fees. This is designed to allow them to charge a fee in the event that it should be advisable.

One example of where it might be advisable might be, for example, where there's a marriage breakup and one of the parties, or both of the parties, desire some kind of evaluation to be made as to the value of the investment. And they might wish at some time to charge a reasonable fee for the expense of doing that valuation, and then they would charge that to the member's account.

And I suppose the theory would be that in some cases it might be more fair for the member concerned to pay that fee than for all the members, you know, to pay the fee where really the cost of the service relates to that one member.

And I should advise, Mr. Chair, that I have a House amendment to clause 1 of the Bill. And I don't know if you want me to present that at the present time or whether you wish me to present that at another time.

The Chair: — Minister, we thank you for advising of a House amendment. We would need the amendment before we finish Clause 1. Now whether it's immediately or . . . probably present the amendment now.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, the amendment is simply to amend clause 1 of the printed Bill by striking out the 1999 and changing it to 2000 so that the title should not be The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1999. The title should be The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000. Really more of a typographical amendment than anything else.

(1445)

Mr. Wakefield: — Now if I could, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, going back to your earlier response for fee-for-services, I understand then it's an enabling amendment to your Act.

Who then, who then decides whether a fee can be determined or should be subjected? Is it the management or does it come back to the management of the fund or does it come back for approval to any kind of a legislative committee?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That would be a decision for the board of trustees of the plan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Minister. I don't really have any other questions pertaining to this one, and we're prepared to allow it to move forward, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: — I thank the member for Lloydminster for that.

Committee members, what we have to deal with first is the amendment to Clause 1 as moved by the Minister of Finance. The amendment will read:

Amend Clause 1 of the printed Bill by striking out "*The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 1999*" and substituting "*The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000*".

Amendment agreed to.

Clause 1 as amended agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the opposition for their co-operation with respect to moving the Bill along to third reading, and I will move that we report the Bill with amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill as amended.

Bill No. 32 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2000

The Chair: — Minister, are you . . . the Minister of Finance, we have the same minister, the same official?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The Minister of Finance is still the same minister, Mr. Deputy Chair, and we still have as executive director, Mr. Brian Smith, and he will still be the same official.

The Chair: — This is wonderful news. Thank you for that humour, Minister.

Clause 1

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Humour aside, we're going to try and get on with a couple of other questions if we could on this particular Bill.

We've had several members of the opposition discussing this Bill certainly in debate. And one of the things that we noticed that this is, in fact, quite a good news fund and has accumulated to a very significant amount.

I guess my opening question, Mr. Minister: how broadly did you consult with this with the municipalities and some of the employees prior to putting the amendments together in this introduction?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It's quite accurate to say, Mr. Deputy Chair, that we consulted very, very broadly and extensively. We distributed the survey about what changes would be desired to 14,262 active, inactive, and retired members, and also to 772 different employers. So it's been very, very expensive consultation.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, because the surplus has run up to such a very large extent, the obvious question is, is how did this . . . What events occurred? How did this pension plan become such a large number?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The surplus was run up because there were higher than expected returns on investments.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, when there is a downturn in the economy, which will likely happen because things are very cyclical, how is this going to affect the pension plan?

And I'd like to ask another question while I'm on my feet, Mr. Chairman. The pension plan itself, was there any suggestion or thought given in the amendments to maybe restructuring the amount of fee paid toward the pension plan fund?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In answer to the first question, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I can advise the member that all of these changes are based upon the advice of actuaries who set out what the surplus is and what can be done to use the surplus while, at the same time, maintaining the integrity and sustainability of the fund.

Some of these changes are only for five years. But the answer is that the actuaries, their job is to give advice about how to deal with the surplus. And of course if you don't deal with the surplus, Revenue Canada will deal with it for you by deregistering your pension plan. So it has to be dealt with.

In answer to the second part of the question, no, I don't think that either the employers or the employees were interested in necessarily changing the rate of contribution to the plan. They were more interested — and this is where the consultation was done and gave the advice — in improving the benefits to the members. And this is what was done.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I just wanted to say that there's no further questions, and we're prepared to move this one along. And I want to extend a thanks to your official for helping us through this.

The Chair: — I thank the member for Lloydminster.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 15 inclusive agreed to.

The Chair: — I invite the Minister of Finance to move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Before I do that I would like to thank the member from Lloydminster and the opposition very much for moving the Bill along to third reading, and for their very insightful questions with respect to the Bill.

And also I'd like to thank Mr. Brian Smith, not only for the good work he does every day and throughout the year managing the Public Employees Benefit Agency but for his assistance here today.

And with that I would like to move that we report the Bill

without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 4 — The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000

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

Motion agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly I move that Bill No. 4 be now read the third time and passed under its title.

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

Bill No. 32 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2000

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

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

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 59

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 59 — The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to speak to the House on Bill No. 59, the construction labour relations Act. The introduction of this Bill is a clear example, another example, of this government's lack of commitment to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

The minister, in her preamble on the history leading to this Bill, stated that unionized contractors, who are having a hard time competing with non-unionized companies in the '80s, created spinoff non-unionized companies. We all know that trade unions couldn't organize these spinoff companies, so they lobby the government for a Bill that will do the job for them.

At a recent meeting of the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce delegates, they passed a number of resolutions to the government. One was to scrap proposed changes to The Construction Industry Labour Relations Act, 1992 which would force unionization of non-union contractors.

IPSCO vice-president Mike Carr, of the chamber's labour committee, said the proposed legislation is more objectionable than the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement which

required 75 per cent of the employees working on Crown projects to be unionized. In practical terms, we're going from bad to much, much worse.

Mr. Speaker, we just have to wonder what it's going to take to make this government listen to the people of this province. The minister claims that these measures are essential to fair competition within Saskatchewan industry and will encourage skilled construction workers to remain in our province. That is a fallacy. I'd like to know what data the Minister of Labour utilized to support this assumption.

The National Institute for Labor Relations Research in Virginia states that overall the states with right-to-work laws, banning the forced payment of union dues, increased their total non-farm employment by an annual of 2.1 per cent in 1998. That's a 40 per cent faster rate of growth than the non-right-to-work states growth at only 1.5 per cent.

The institute's program director, David Kendrick, further states that right-to-work states offer an environment of voluntary co-operation between labour and management.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 59 will force unionized workers to join unions, or non-unionized workers will be forced to leave the province just to find work. This government in its arrogance and determination to protect and expand one of its sources for election funding is willing to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've received phone calls and letters from both unionized and non-unionized workers opposed to this Bill. They feel their freedom of choice is being eroded.

One constituent stated:

I don't deny that there is a place for unions and that history shows the work that they have done for labourers over the years. However, living in a free country, it has always been my right to choose. If it is my wish to join a union, I would vote for certification and not to be ordered to do so by a democratic government.

Mr. Speaker, this government's determination to protect trade unions is at the detriment of all taxpayers of Saskatchewan.

The National Institute for Labor Relations Research has some remarkable statistics from the US (United States) Bureau of Labor Statistics on state-by-state employment reports dating back for more than two decades. It shows a consistent pattern of higher job growth in right-to-work states than in forced unionized states.

Overall the 21 right-to-work states created 10,100 more jobs on average than the 20 non-right-to-work states. Eight of the top ten states in manufacturing job growth were right-to-work states. Between 1990 and 1995, right-to-work states raised their non-farm employment by an annual of 4.5 per cent — nearly four times the non-right-to-work-states paltry growth of .64.

Right-to-work states have also shown greater gains of income

growth, and local cost of living figures show that families in right-to-work states actually have more real income than families in non-right-to-work states.

Mr. Speaker, these are the statistics that support my constituents' wish to have a choice on whether they want to join a union or not. Yet, Mr. Speaker, this government is attempting to push a Bill through that will inhibit the rights of workers in non-unionized companies and force them to join a union in order to work, or else they're going to have to leave the province, Mr. Speaker.

Since this government has come to power Saskatchewan's population has remained stagnant. Other provinces boast of increased population growth, but Saskatchewan is stagnant.

Bills like Bill 59 drive out our workforce and then they drive out our companies, Mr. Speaker. North Saskatoon Business Association recently released the results of a survey which said 1 in 10 members were considering moving all of their operations out of this province; 1 in 10 businesses are considering moving their businesses out of Saskatchewan yet this government, instead of choosing to address this very potential problem, prefers to bring in more restrictive legislation which will push those who are only considering leaving into actually leaving.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan desperately needs population growth — not population stagnation. This government continues to place restrictions limiting fair competition and growth on companies. Even our young people realize this and they realize this province has nothing to offer them.

Mr. Speaker, my CA's (constituency assistant) problem is a glaring example of the loss of young people. They have one daughter working in Switzerland. She intended to go there for only one year but she will currently be entering her third year there.

Their second daughter, who is graduating this week from high school, is planning to go to Switzerland to work as well. Their son, who was part of an exchange in Ontario and Thailand last summer, returned in January and he's headed for Calgary for employment. From his travels he realizes that Saskatchewan has very little to offer him, including the university classes that he wants, so he'll be willing to move to Ontario this fall for university.

This is a third-generation family farm, and their older son recently commented that even though he's enjoying farming this spring, he knows there is no future for him on the farm. And the younger son, who is still at home, unequivocally states that if the farm is left to him he's going to sell it.

Mr. Speaker, my CA and her husband do not want their children living out of province but they know there is no future for them here in Saskatchewan in the place they have proudly called home. They know that Bills like Bill 59 will continue to drive companies and the workforce out of Saskatchewan until only our seniors, who have no choice, will be left to stay here.

Madam Minister, in her introduction of Bill 59, The Construction Industry Labour Relations Amendment Act, 2000,

stated that, with the passage of this Bill, the building trade unions covered by the certification orders that are still in place will need to apply to the Labour Relations Board on a company by company basis to request a ruling on whether the unionized parent company and the non-unionized, spinoff company are related.

Mr. Speaker, with the boards leaning towards the trade unions, it's a foregone conclusion what the rulings will be. And it definitely will not be in favour of the non-unionized workers or the companies.

The whole issue of the Labour Relations Board and the laws regarding them have been at the forefront of labour relation and trade union certification within the targeted manufacturing constituency that I could proudly call mine, Mr. Speaker — within the constituency of Kelvington-Wadena.

Many are aware of the situation at Doepker's where workers feel they were duped by union representatives into signing a union card. They were erroneously led to believe that there would be a vote on their right to certify. The majority of the workers there were extremely disappointed when the Labour Board granted automatic certification for Doepker Industries.

This government has often touted the manufacturing industries in my constituency as a shining example of economic development. Yet now they are unwilling to listen to them when they have a problem with major implications this Bill has to the province of Saskatchewan and to their business.

I'd like to read a letter from one of the founders of Doepker Industries, Francis Doepker, which is published in the *Humboldt Journal* on April 27, 2000:

As I look back over the years, I observe that the community of Anaheim and Doepker Industries have survived, in spite of the repeated efforts by people in positions of power to punish . . . small town manufacturing business, and others in our area, with threatened school closures, seemingly for the crime of providing good job opportunities for so many people.

I hope that the present attempt by a few of these job beneficiaries to again wreck the peace and quiet of our people by their union activity will end up turning to (and that the community will end up returning to) normal . . . when all is said and done.

I made a direct personal plea to the Premier of Saskatchewan to take advantage of his position of the highest power in . . . (Saskatchewan), to intervene in the unfair threat of automatic certification of our company workforce by the Labour Board, and to please order that a secret ballot vote take place to allow a fair outcome of their wishes.

I was disappointed with his answer, which was: "I am sure you will understand . . . it would be inappropriate for me as (the) Premier of this province to comment on the decisions of the Labour Relations Board. I will, however, forward your letter to the Honourable Joanne Crofford, Minister of Labour, for her consideration."

The neglect by both the Premier and (his) minister to act on our company's behalf results in the notice of automatic certification of both Anaheim and Moose Jaw plant workers. We are asking ourselves who one might have judged to turn to for assistance in a case of such unfair activity by union activists — maybe Minot or Calgary?

Why couldn't the freedom to avoid joining a union qualify the same as (the) freedom to join?

Mr. Speaker:

In political terms, it's obvious that both carry the same right. The above uncontrolled outcome points to an urgent need for changes to the present . . . labour laws before the remaining job-supplying companies are subjected to the same unjust procedure our company received last week.

For the brother and myself who spent four of the best years of our lives in the armed forces, being led to believe we were protecting freedom and democracy, we can only feel betrayal and disillusionment with the reality before us. Plenty of young men died for the cause — can't our legislators feel or see the disappointment in our midst? It would be in their interest of protecting our small communities that they should do . . . (it).

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Francis Doepker, founder of Doepker Industries, wrote this article in the *Humboldt Journal* this year. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. I thank the hon. member for assisting and supporting the call for order, but the Chair will be doing that. Order, please! There'll be ample opportunity . . . there will be opportunity for members to enter this debate, and I would ask that you allow the member from Kelvington-Wadena to continue with her presentation.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this says it all. This NDP government prefers to protect the trade unions by introducing Bill 59 which will force non-unionized workers to join trade unions, yet it is unwilling to make the changes to the way the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board operates and to The Trade Union Act that Mr. Doepker and PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association) and the Saskatchewan Party are calling for.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce says scrap this Bill. Mr. Carr of IPSCO says that we're going from bad to much, much worse. Non-unionized workers are saying, what about my right to choose?

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan is listening to the people of Saskatchewan and will not support Bill 59. And, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on this Bill at this time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

**Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

The Chair: — Before I call the first subvote, I'll invite the hon. minister responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And it's a pleasure for me today to introduce the officials for Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation that are with me. To my right we have John Law, the president. And behind John is Debbie Koshman, who is vice-president of finance and risk management. To the left, Al Moffat, who is vice-president, commercial services. Directly behind me would be Garth Rusconi, vice-president of accommodation services. And diagonally to John would be Paul Radigan, director of financial planning.

Subvote (SP01)

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome to the committee, welcome the minister, and we welcome this opportunity.

Would like to start off with, can you tell us of any major changes that happened in your department last year? Are there any major changes . . . do you foresee any major changes coming in this current year?

(1515)

The Chair: — Why is the hon. member for Saskatoon Southeast on her feet?

Ms. Lorje: — To ask for permission to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to introduce a constituent of Regina South, but someone well-known to all members in this legislature since he was a page in the last session. And I am referring, of course, to the very fine looking gentleman in the Speaker's gallery, Mr. Daniel Abramson.

Daniel and I have had many long and interesting discussions about Hebraic culture and Jewish religion.

And I also would like to let you know that Daniel has just been accepted into the Ontario College of Art & Design. So I'm sure that all members of this Assembly wish him all the best with his studies, and that we're just as proud of him as his family is.

Welcome, Daniel.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

**Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

Subvote (SP01)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the member for his question. I think I would say probably he would note that the one big change would be the reduction in the grant amount allocated to SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) by about \$12 million. But we would note it's because of the change in the kinds of projects we would be involved in.

You're aware that we have come to near completion on some of the work that's being done for example in the Legislative Building and the stabilization of the wing of the building. We've done extensive work on the Centre of the Arts, and that's been completed, as well as the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) campus consolidation that's been underway. And we won't have nearly that magnitude of project work next year.

I think you would probably also note that over the last few months we have made announcements with SaskPower for example on energy management efficiencies that we can achieve in some of our buildings when we work together in that way, and some of the environmental projects that we'd be entering into.

But I think that would be the one area that I would say you would see the reduction in dollars and the big change, and a work schedule that's not as energetic as it has been in the past.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, the overall budget estimate for this year is a whole lot less than last year, and can you explain why — and of course you did that. But is part of it because of the transfer of the expense to the new Crown corporation overseeing the land information system?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Yes, thank you. Mr. Chairman, and to the member opposite, I think it's SaskGeomatics that you're referring to. We developed the system within Sask Property Management and that part of the new land corporation has been going over in two phases, the year before and then last year.

So there would be about \$2 million of that amount that would be allocated to the asset of the SaskGeomatics that's gone over. So the one million this year and one million last. And that's the base computer information system that would be used to complete the land project.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Hon. Minister, how much space currently leased by your corporation is currently unoccupied by government agencies? The properties that you have leased — are there some vacancies? And if there are, where might they be?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Chair. To answer the member's question, we have in total at March 31, 2000, about 55,424 square metres of vacant space. When it's considered as compared to the entire property management portfolio, the usable vacant space is about 3.6 per cent.

We have been doing some program consolidation over the last three to four years, and we're seeing to those moves and changes either in our own space or leased space, a saving of about 3 to \$4 million.

Mr. Chair, I would also like to point out to the member that where . . . in this area there is an industry standard. The standard is about 5 to 7 per cent of vacancy rate, and we're well within, or actually we're quite well below, that standard. Thank you.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Are there any special . . . where are those locations? Where is the majority of those vacant properties?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, we have in the portfolio about 1,300 locations. Some are our own space, some are leased spaces, and we would be pleased to get together a listing of the areas where most of those vacancies occur. And then you would know of course that we have in Regina, if you look at the old normal school property, the archdiocese property. In Weyburn there's Souris Valley, an amount of space there.

So there are a number of locations spread throughout the province but we'll get a list together for you very quickly and have that information available, where it's a large space of vacant. If there's more information the member would require, if he'd just ask and we'd provide that.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That is now the total . . . that's the leased and owned property? I asked if there was a breakdown. Can you break — when you give me that answer — could you break what is leased and what is owned, the vacancy rates or those numbers? Is that a possibility?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — That's . . . we can do that.

Mr. Peters: — What is the corporation's policy in regards to signing long-term leases and what would you consider a long-term lease, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, I would answer the question in this way. When we in '91 took over the portfolio, there were many leases that were longer-term leases, and we've managed those. And when they would be able to be renegotiated, we've attempted to do that.

But our policy has been a standard of about five years. So leases could be asked to . . . When we put out a proposal call we would ask for what a five-year lease might look like, what a ten-year lease might look like. But anything beyond a five-year lease would require board approval and be very carefully considered by board before it would go into anything beyond the five-year time frame, because that's the standard we've developed and utilized.

Now we do have some northern locations where we've entered into co-operative arrangements with municipalities to do some shared spacing. And it makes some sense in those communities, where they want to work together with us to save dollars and to provide efficiencies and also to be able to support the community providing the programs and services they need.

And so there may be some of those that from the past are longer terms and we've still looked at those leases and kept them with that arrangement. But that would be the only anomaly that I can think of at this time.

So the answer would be: usually a five-year lease.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, does the corporation sublet or rent out any of its space to private business or agencies?

(1530)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chairman, to the member opposite. As you would know, our primary focus is to provide space for government departments and government services in the community. So the vast majority of our space would be utilized in that way.

We have entered into some arrangements with the federal government to accommodate some of their space. But a very, very small fraction of the portfolio might be a sublease for whatever the reason could be on a very short-term basis to try and accommodate a private group or an individual.

Someone mentioned a location that may for example, if we've got a space available, that was rented to a dental business for a short period of time, those kinds of things. But those would be very few times during our portfolio that we would go outside of the government, either ourselves or federal.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, does this corporation have any property rented in the Wascana Oil Building? And if they do, what might it be used for?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, the answer to that question would be two departments — the Social Services department on a five-year lease basis, and the Department of Justice. With both those departments together we have about 400 square metres.

So it's been a very specific program that may have asked for accommodation of whatever location or whatever. But it would be less than 400 square metres with those two departments.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, if a Crown Corporation is looking to move, do you have any control? Moving from one location to another, do you have a definite control or do you have any say into where this corporation can move or Crown can move to?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chairman, we do not have responsibility for Crown facilities and Crown space, accommodation, or choices.

What we've attempted to do over a number of years is bring everyone together and working in a space coordination committee to try and understand what each area's needs are. And if there's an ability, it might be even through Education or through some of the Crowns, to say if there's a location where you can co-operate. Or if one space is going to become vacant and it could be used by another group, then that's done through the co-operative approach of the committee work. But we do

not have the purview of the Crown decision making; that's a separate entity.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, can you give us an update on the renovations of the old Plains hospital site to now the SIAST site — is that work complete?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Well, Mr. Chair, as you would know, the SIAST consolidation project is a positive addition to the knowledge corridor in Regina. And the project remains on schedule with the campuses to be completed there moved by the fall to accommodate students in their fall location.

And the new classes that are in the facility at present would be the agricultural program, with shop space; a welding program, with new shop program space; the machine shop program; the GMASEP (general motors auto service educational program) program; the automotive service technician program; the auto body technician program; the early childhood development program; the resource centre; the dental program; and the night extension classes.

We have a total of five programs that will be relocated there in the month of June. And that's the building system technician program; the graphic arts production program; the electronics communication technician program; applied photography; and new media communications.

There was a pamphlet I got from SIAST to talk about what was now available there, and certainly the tour of the building when we're looking at the ability to share the resources and to have the space available for many of the trades and technologies that are the area that people indicate would be a growth engine in our economy, is certainly welcome to the students.

And we're pleased to be able to accommodate their programs, as I said, on the schedule that we allocated and to be able to have them in, in total in the fall programming.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So is the renovations complete or not? That's the question I asked.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — No, it's not complete. But I would say that it is substantively complete by the end of July. And we do have areas there that will also be spaces for future program needs or growth or development. So there are spaces that you note when you with the student body enjoy the new campus, you will note that there are areas that are set aside for that.

But within the budget and the consolidation moves that we were asked to do, they will be for the most part complete by the end of July.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. What was the original budget to renovate this building to its present . . . what was the original budget?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — That, Mr. Chair, as you would note through budget allocations that have been before you — we were allocated \$29 million for the project. We have committed authorizations for expenditures that total \$21.6 million,

uncommitted authorizations for expenditures of about 4 to \$5 million, and for a total project cost to date of \$26.2 million. Thank you.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So the other overruns were carried by the Regina Health Board then. Is that what you're suggesting — the overruns on this project?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, I can say that our responsibility began once the health board decommissioned the building and vacated the building, and then our project started. So Project '98 and the health board and whatever, all of those numbers that you saw in the Provincial Auditor and the responsibility of the health board, would be those responsibilities.

Our numbers begin when we move in to begin the project we were asked to do, which would be the consolidation of the SIAST campuses and to provide the programming. And it was our hope, and now we see it almost within our grasp, to have all of the students there by the fall schedule and semester.

So we have managed the program very carefully. I can say that it's consumed many, many hours of work by our officials, and they've been very diligent every step along the way, reporting to me every step along the way. And we have no cost overruns from our perspective of the SIAST project.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Are all of the . . . Mr. Chairman, are all of the students now going — that are in the SIAST program — are they all going to be going to that facility or are there going to be other facilities in the . . . within the city limits of Regina?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I guess the question is . . . and probably would be more correctly asked of our Minister of Post-Secondary Education, but I'll try it. Because I really wouldn't say to him 100 per cent for certain, are there any stragglers or any programs anywhere else within the city.

But what we were asked to do for SIAST was to have a fully integrated facility that would be in the location of the knowledge corridor and have the synergy and the dynamism that would be the relationship with the university and so on.

So we were asked to consolidate eight campuses into one. And all of the benefits of resources and students in one location coming together, has in our minds been accomplished.

I will endeavour to find out for you if there's a program we're not quite certain of — because ours was the space requirement — whether perhaps a new program was set up that couldn't be accommodated. But what we were asked to put into the program space has . . . will be complete by the end of July.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, what happened to the old building, or what's going to happen to the old building that SIAST was in formerly?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank the member opposite for the question. There were some locations . . . it's not just one

location, and he may have a particular location he'd like to question us about. But there were many locations. The ones that we had leased for SIAST, the leases no longer exist, and those will be savings to government.

The buildings that we own, again perhaps through the space coordination committee or through knowledge of other government programs and services, we would attempt to have adaptive reuses for those locations.

So the answer would be, the leases are no longer for SIAST programming. And the other ones that we own, we'll try and accommodate a reuse.

(1545)

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, Madam Minister, are there other buildings being used for education and post-education that are owned by the corporation? Or as minister ... (inaudible) ... you know, controlled?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Perhaps, Mr. Chair, if I could for clarification, because we were talking about SIAST and predominantly Regina. And so I'm not certain if you were asking about Regina locations or other locations. Because there's Kelsey of course and there's a number of other institutions that ...

An Hon. Member: — Just Regina.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Just Regina? All right, thank you.

We've had eight, as I mentioned. Four were leased; four were owned. I did fail to mention that if we aren't able to have a reuse, we would then go through the normal disposal policy that government follows for vacant buildings. And so that would go into that process.

But as far as we're aware, unless, as I said, there's some stragglers of SIAST that we can't think of right now, that would be the case.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, can you give us an update on the restoration of the Legislative Building in terms of progress of work and also whether or not it's on budget.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Well, this is an exciting project, Mr. Chair. And certainly, as the chairperson as well of Wascana Centre Authority, we all know what this means to the capital city of our province.

So I get quite excited when I want to talk about this, because I also know that we've worked with students on web sites to share information as it goes along. And of course you saw the school group the other day that did the time capsule.

There were other students that made mock-ups of the building and the work that was being done. And we did discover workers' tools from the original construction. And so there's so many good things to talk about.

And I guess the acceptance of the community — that they really take pride in the seat of government and want to see it restored for future generations. So I've had all kinds of comments like that as well.

To the member's direct question about where we're at in the project and what the project was budgeted at. We began the project, which would be a four-year program, in 1997 and it started with the foundation stabilization part of the program.

Phase one included stabilizing the building's foundation and upgrading the underground mechanical work and encasing the perimeter walls in concrete. And so there's approximately 1,800 precast concrete piles installed to support the foundation. I know some members took an opportunity to go down under with their hard hats.

And now we can say that, including the filling of the underground entrance that was completed about October 1 of 1999, we were allocated for that part of the program \$10 million. And we expended about \$9.6 million and pretty close to the time frame that was allocated to us to complete that part of the work.

You've seen the results of phase two. It's interesting in historic buildings to try to live up to fire code and accessibility standards. And we're trying to do that and managed that very well. We began that in the fall of 1999 and it was tendered out for about \$3.5 million. We're hoping that within this current year we'll be complete.

So with that we believe that ... the original budget schedule for us was \$20 million, including both phase one and two, as well as the consulting, the design work, and any of the other costs associated with rehabilitation of the building. We're very hopeful that we'll be within the allocated amount to us.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Going to a different line of thinking, how many cars, or how many vehicles are in the government fleet? And what is the life — making it even more difficult — what is the life expectancy of a vehicle? And how many do you plan to replace in this one year?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Okay. Our fleet grand total would be 4,257 vehicles. Generally the standard is about eight years or 160,000 kilometres. Usually those standards are developed to provide for the optimum efficiency, but also your concern is you have people who drive all over the province to provide programs and services. So I'm very mindful of safety as well, although we have been getting over 200,000 kilometres out of many, many of our vehicles.

And this year, or the past year to date, we're going to be purchasing about 239 vehicles and we'll be leasing about 298 vehicles for a total cost of about, oh, around \$6 million.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, can you tell me what the maintenance cost for that fleet would be for one year? I mean just take an average year of what that might be.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — We're trying to look for that information. If we get it before the end of our session, we'd

certainly provide it, or we'll endeavour to get it to you as quickly as we can.

Certainly a fleet that size, if you know what your own family vehicles are like, and if you've got teenagers, that adds to your own personal fleet — there's an expense to that. And we'll try and get that number to you as quickly as we can.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Mr. Chairman, and Madam Minister, does your department manage the Liquor Board properties in Saskatchewan? And if you do, can you tell me what the cost of the new building in North Battleford might be?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. Mr. Chair, for the Liquor and Gaming Authority, what we predominantly provide for them is security, so we don't have that. And with my other hat on, I don't have that information available this afternoon. But I could get that information to you.

We, again through the space coordination, would try and look at alternate uses, or if there's something coming up that someone else would be able to utilize, we would try and accommodate that. But I don't have the price of that particular building, and I can get that for you.

Mr. Peters: — Mr. Chair, the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy is going to ask a number of questions at this time.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, I would like to ask you a few questions about Souris Valley Extended Care hospital building in Weyburn. First of all, what are your plans for the building now housing Souris Valley Extended Care hospital? And does the health board lease the whole building and grounds from SPMC or just the portion that they use, and what do they pay?

(1600)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a few responses. I guess I'll try and cover what you're asking.

The first one is that the health district then would pay for the amount of buildings that they utilize. So they have an agreement with the amount of space they would need and they would pay for the space that they're in. And we don't allocate to them costs for other parts of the building that are occupied by other people.

We are not responsible, SPMC, for the building or the operation of the building, but we are responsible for the maintenance.

And since I've taken this portfolio on, we have had some interest by outside investors and some foreign investors in the adaptive reuse of some of the building or perhaps all of it. We try to follow those up with great enthusiasm and zeal. As you know, it would be quite a benefit to your community and to a very historic location.

I think the most recent one is a foreign investor and we're, with as much expediency and diligence as we can, following up on that show of interest.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So my

understanding then is that I have also been contacted by this same company, and so you are entertaining them being allowed to buy the building and the grounds?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — To the member opposite, through yourself, Mr. Chair. We had an initial inquiry — I think we're talking the same individuals. And when we have an expression of interest, we have quite an information package available to the group or the individual.

And there's documentation there that would show the condition of the building; what's available in the building; the square footage; what state some of the building is in; and the other, you know, is occupied by whom; and what would be the, I guess, program area — those kinds of things. So we've got quite an extensive package we provide.

We have done that for this individual and haven't heard a response, I think, to date.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, so you are waiting for them to now respond back to you, if I understand it correctly.

I guess, Madam Minister, there has been a lot of concern in our constituency that Souris Valley could be demolished. Is there any intent by your department to do so?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Well, Mr. Chair, to the member's question. We have no formal plans for demolition of the building. There are areas, as she would know, that are not used and we would have to have plans in place to decommission those areas and to provide safety and to meet those requirements.

We try to look at all possible options within government for the use, and the last tour I had there, had some regional college space I believe. There was a wonderful centre providing programs for parents and children, and those kinds of activities. They spread a little bit when they get in there because the space is so nice for children to go racing down the halls. So that's a hard one — to keep them within the space allocated.

But that's the way we like to do that, is to look at all of the internal uses within government, if there's something we can accommodate. We'll go to external people through again the coordination of space such as the Crowns and see if there's anybody who needs space.

And we will then . . . as I've mentioned earlier, if there's opportunities or we get wind of anyone who would invest or want to have that building, we go after that with much vigour and great zeal. But at this time you would know in advance if there is any way we would want to dispose of parts of the building and it goes through a formal process.

I guess that's all I can report at this time on the building.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, if a local group was interested in using part of Souris Valley building, would they have to . . . would they work through your department or would they have to work through the local health board — part of the unused portion of the building?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, to the question as posed — they would deal with us. They would deal with SPMC. We would look at the requirements that they have, if it's impacting on any of the other clients, for example, that are utilizing the building. And as you know, the health facility would have people who would need to know their program's not disrupted.

If it were subleasing of some of the health district space, they would work with the health unit there. But most of the time it would be with us. And then we would look at entering into agreement with them on a cost recovery basis.

Ms. Bakken: — Madam Minister, I just have one more question. What is the selling price for Souris Valley and grounds?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, to anyone listening, have we got a deal for you.

This is under negotiation at any time. We'd certainly look at what we could accommodate, and we'd be delighted to do so. So I think this, as the member opposite would know, could be entertained in a very positive way. And if anyone were willing to look at making a deal with us, we'd be glad to look at what they had to offer.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. Madam Minister, I just have a couple of questions. One of them — when you rent or lease property in a community and then lease it back to a department or to an office, do you have a set amount of markup that you make between those two prices?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. With this terminology, if it's an all-in lease it's a pass through the departments. There's no additional charges. There would be a very small administrative cost to manage the lease or whatever, but it's very, very small. So we usually just say it's on the cost . . . straight cost-recovery basis. There's no markup.

There may be times where it's not an all-in lease and so we would lease the space and SPMC might provide for example the security, some of the maintenance, whatever the requirement of the space, they would come to us. And again, that would be a cost-recovery charge back to the program area that would request that of us.

But I think for most instances, if it's a all-in lease, it's cost recovery.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, just a couple of very quick questions. How many leases are held on buildings that formerly housed rural service centres?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the member opposite, if he doesn't mind, could I ask for clarification? Are you saying how many leases do we hold on rural service centres now or how many we did hold and we're now not holding any longer? Could you clarify it for me?

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — I was curious, Madam Minister, as to how many leases are held on buildings that formerly housed rural service centres. How many leases are held on buildings where the rural service centres no longer exist?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, there's many pieces of information my very qualified, talented people have in their mind, this is not one of them. But we're going to research that and get to you as quickly as we can.

We do have numbers on the leases that we hold, and then some of the centres we were into leases and no longer into them, and some we may hold the lease because it was long-term, that kind of thing. So we'll break that detail out for you.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister. I would very, very much appreciate that. And if as well, you could indicate the length of lease remaining on some of these buildings that housed the rural service centres, as I say, until they were closed down.

And the other piece of information that might be interesting as well, is how many of those are now vacant. And after the rural service centres were closed, how many of those with leases in effect remain vacant to this day? I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, what I can respond as far as we know right now is we don't have any vacant spaces that were leased before, so there are no vacancies.

And I just know that the member opposite doesn't want me to start in on what kind of leases and what kind of arrangements were made from the past that were either very difficult to get out of or were not a standard kind of an arrangement, so I won't go there.

We will get the information he asks.

Mr. Peters: — We thank you. This is all the questions we have, and we thank you, Madam Minister. We thank the group that came with you. Thank you.

Subvote (SP01) agreed to.

Subvote (SP02) agreed to.

Vote 53 agreed to.

**Supplementary Estimates 1999-2000
General Revenue Fund
Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation
Vote 53**

Subvote (SP01) agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions. I think, as we noted by the number of people who rotated through the question chair, that we do provide services throughout the province. And we thank you for the interest in the portfolio.

I'd like to thank my officials that came to help me and support me through the estimates today. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — That's fair enough, Minister, but we're not quite done. We're not quite done unless you would like to give up the supplementary amounts.

Vote 53 agreed to.

(1615)

**General Revenue Fund
Finance
Vote 18**

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I have with me today, to my immediate left, Dr. Paul Boothe, who is the deputy minister of Finance; and to his left is Mr. Terry Paton, who is the Provincial Comptroller; and to my right is Mr. Len Rog, who is the assistant deputy minister of the revenue division in the Department of Finance.

Behind Mr. Rog is Mr. David Pratt, who is the senior analyst in the taxation and intergovernmental affairs branch of the department. Behind me is Mr. Glen Veikle who is the assistant deputy minister of the treasury board branch. Behind Dr. Boothe is Mr. Bill Van Sickle who is the executive director of the corporate services division; and behind Mr. Paton is Mr. Kevin Banman, who is the senior analyst with the economic and fiscal policy branch of Finance.

Subvote (FI01)

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, may I welcome you again and your officials here. I have just a few questions that I'd like to go through.

First of all, I'm going to be looking at some of the material that was presented in your budget statement under the quoted vote.

When I look at the summary of expenditures for your department, Mr. Minister, I notice that there's been some changes from the estimated '99-2000, up to the estimated 2000-2001 which we are presently looking at. And if I could I'd like to just get a bit of an overview as to why these particular changes.

Now the first one that I had marked in my view . . . or in my book rather, is the increase in the administration budget. It looks to me like that increase, by my calculation, is about 18 or 19 per cent. And I wondered if you could give me a reason for that kind of increase, and why it might be justified in this particular budget year?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, there is an increase in administrative expenditures in the Department of Finance.

The first reason is . . . the member may recall, Mr. Chair, when we had Dr. Al Johnson here in the Legislative Chamber and he was introduced and I announced the establishment of the Al Johnson Chair in Public Policy which is . . . the first occupant of which is Dr. Hartley Furtan.

And that is an administrative expense that has been added to the budget of the Department of Finance, which we're happy to do because we think we can get some good research and work done in how to deal with the issue of subsidies in agricultural

commodities and the problems we're having with the World Trade Organization and so on. So that's one reason.

A second reason is we are required as government to improve public information technology to meet the public's desire to see more government access and services on-line. And what we mean by that is that the business community for example, instead of communicating with the government by ordinary mail and having us communicate with them by ordinary mail, more and more expects government, and I think rightly so, to set up a system whereby they can communicate electronically. And that of course comes with a cost because we have to set that up.

And I suppose the answer there would be that we are going to be providing better service but there's a cost to providing the better service and we have to develop the infrastructure to do that.

Thirdly, we are enhancing accountability by voluntarily tabling an annual report, which we didn't previously do, but which is consistent with the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor and the accountability project that is going on throughout government.

So the brief answer is: costs up because of more research to support the agricultural community, better service to our customers, and better accountability to the legislature and the people of the province.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, just to follow up on that a little bit. The new Chair that was established, currently occupied by Dr. Furtan, I agree that is probably going to — at least I would hope that that's going to — provide us with some insight because it allows Dr. Furtan to focus specifically on some topics. And I've already had the opportunity to chat with him and I'm looking forward to some of his reports that I'm sure will be coming.

Refresh my memory if you could, Mr. Minister. Is that a . . . How long a term is that?

And following that, if I could ask another question based on your response: the annual report that you're talking about, is that a report that we might be able to construe as a business plan for your department?

And the third question would be that the new infrastructure that you're putting in place for electronic transfer of information, is that anticipated to be a one-year expenditure so that we should be able to expect the administration budget to be reduced from this year in ongoing years?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The term of the Chair is one year for Dr. Furtan, although the Chair has been established on a permanent basis so that when his tenure is up, which would coincide with the end of the fiscal year, then somebody else would occupy that Chair. So it's an ongoing expenditure.

The plan of the annual report of the department, certainly that will attempt to increase and improve accountability in the future. But that very much is a work in progress. We're still in the process of trying to come up with a system whereby we will

be putting forward goals and ways in which to measure the performance of government so that we can better judge. And that will be evolving over time.

With respect to the question about the information technology, that will really be an ongoing expense. There will be some set-up costs, but there will be ongoing operational costs in order to bring government on line for the business community and others that need to communicate with us in a timely way.

Mr. Wakefield: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, the annual report stating goals, I'm a very big supporter of establishing goals and establishing visions. And so I think that's going to be a very valuable tool. And I'm hoping that it will contain the vision that you foresee coming in the next little while in your particular department.

If I could I'd like to just quickly look at some of these other items. Again in the summary of expenditures, there's one item that I flagged under budget analysis that has increased rather significantly. That's a 12 per cent increase from your estimated 1999-2000. And I'm wondering why in this particular year there was such an increase needed for your budget analysis as opposed to in previous years.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is primarily the new accountability unit, which is housed within the budget division. And the accountability unit will, as the member said we should, and I agree, be telling us how to set out goals for government and government departments, and how to measure them.

And in the next year's annual report of the Department of Finance, for example, we will set out goals for the department that we wish to meet and which we want the public to judge us by so that they can see if we've done what we said we were going to do.

But beyond that, we also have people in this division who are developing a way to bring that kind of accountability to the government as a whole. And the increased expense is the expenditure of developing the accountability process in government.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thanks, Mr. Minister. I'd just like to follow up a little bit on that accountability unit that you referred to.

How many people are involved in that? And would I be correct in assuming that that will be a continuing . . . you'll be utilizing that unit continually and therefore that particular budget analysis item will be increased over a longer period of time?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is for individuals working in the accountability unit. And we anticipate that for the time being they will continue to work until we have all of the departments on line, so to speak, with respect to better strategic planning, goal setting, and performance-based management.

(1630)

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, Mr. Minister, there's another item that I would ask if you would clarify a little bit in terms of its role, and that's the personnel policy secretariat that is showing about a 30 per cent increase in its numbers over the

last estimate.

Would I be correct in assuming that some of those people are contributing to the overall policy development, or budget analysis, or the annual report? It almost appears to me that there's a redundancy here that maybe I'm not aware of.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — No, it would not be correct, Mr. Chair, to assume there's a redundancy.

The role of the personnel policy secretariat is to advise government — not just the Department of Finance — but government as a whole with respect to labour relations matters. And this is an ongoing function. It is not related to the accountability aspect of the work going on in the Department of Finance.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that clarification. Mr. Chairman, could you give me the reason why that increase is so significant at 31 per cent. And I know percentages are maybe not a good indicator but it's certainly an item that draws a red flag.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — It is because an additional employee has been added to that secretariat. And it's such a small secretariat that, you know, when you add one person, you're going to have a large increase. But the amount of money being spent — \$359,000 — well I mean it is a large amount of money but in the overall scheme of things and across the government it isn't. But the addition of one employee is the reason for the increase in the expenditure.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, yes, I agree that these, as I mentioned, that these percentages can kind of throw us away from reality.

Talking about the staffing component, I see an increase there of about 6.4 per cent. Now you've covered some of the items that have . . . you've talked about an increase in personnel, the accountability unit as an example, and based on your last question, 6.4 per cent increase in personnel or in staffing — or FTE (full-time equivalents) staffing — is significant, and I would ask if you would comment on that particular number.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, I'm not sure about the 6 per cent increase the member's referring to. The number of full-time equivalent positions in the Department of Finance is going from 394 individuals . . . or full-time positions to 419 which would be an increase of 25 people.

But I should point out that 11 of those would be in the Department of Finance and the rest would be at the Public Employees Benefit Agency, and the costs of those would be paid by the members of various pension plans as opposed to the General Revenue Fund funded by the taxpayers.

Of the 11, there really is an increase of 11 in the department. They are as follows. One is the research Chair that we've already discussed. One is working in the area of electronic commerce; four in the farm fuel program. We're beefing that up because, as the member knows, in the last budget we also removed the cap on the rebate so there will be some more work to be done there. I might add that there is some other

improvements we'd like to make there, such as point-of-sale changes as opposed to a rebate system, as we've discussed here before. Five more in the accountability unit.

So that's the sort of increase that we have and the reasons for the increase, which all are providing services or programs that were not provided before, or were not provided in the same way before.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, on that last point, your point about trying to make further amendments to include the possibility of point-of-sale record for fuel exemption, I think is an excellent direction and I would certainly encourage you to keep moving in that direction.

I would like to briefly talk a little bit about the miscellaneous payment section, and I'm referring to page 61 or (FI08). When I'm looking down those programs, the large difference from the estimated 1999-2000 to the current one that we're looking at is rather a significant decrease. And when I was looking at that number I was trying to understand what that meant under the heading, allowance for doubtful accounts.

Can you tell me what the doubtful accounts means in that particular line entry?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well an allowance for doubtful accounts of course is simply a description of the amount of bad debts that we think we might have — that is, people that don't pay their bills. It may be somebody that owes money from education and health tax and they don't remit it and they go bankrupt, and you can't collect it from them because they've gone bankrupt — something like that.

And it's going down simply because the number and amount of bad debts that we have has been going down. I'm told that some time ago it was up to 1.9 million, and this year it will be 1.6 million.

Nothing very remarkable about it. It's a large sum of money. I suppose in the scheme of things, when you have government revenues of about 5.7 billion, it's a relatively small percentage of our accounts. But you always have to allow for the possibility that there may be individuals, perhaps through no fault of their own, who have a business go under, may owe the government and other creditors some money, can't pay it. We're in the same boat as other people. Sometimes we don't get it — get the money.

The allowance for doubtfuls, we're thinking this year about 1.6 million. I see a few years ago it was 1.9 million, so we're going in the right direction. And that's the answer.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, the reason that I referred to that is I was wondering if there is in fact any taxpayer money at risk, or anticipating money at risk.

I asked a similar question to your colleague, the Minister of Economic and Co-operative Development, and it was explained to me that in terms of investment funding, there is a percentage set aside which is a recognized or required percentage set aside for accounts that may become questionable.

Is there a particular policy with regards to the doubtful account section? And again, would that imply that there's any taxpayers' money at risk? And if you're not going to use the 1.6, what will happen to that particular fund? It will be unspent, or absorbed somewhere else?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well if we didn't have bad accounts to the extent estimated, then the funding would simply lapse at the end of the fiscal year.

I might add that, generally speaking, when your allowance for doubtfuls is going down, that's a sign of a more buoyant economy, that the economy is doing better.

In terms of taxpayers' money being at risk — no, I don't think I'd describe it that way. It simply really is a . . . there's an account receivable of government to all the people that may owe government money. Some of them may not be able to pay and you have to allow for the fact that you may have some bad debts.

And those of us who have been in any kind of business or profession know that that's just part of business life, that there's always some accounts that you're not going to collect. Government is in no different position, but actually the amount that we don't collect is really very, very small compared to the size of government overall.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to move to a different area if I could now. And I'd like to move to a comment that was made in the auditor's report and I'd like to go back to the spring of 1999 auditor's report.

And if I could just quickly, Mr. Minister, one of the recommendations that was given — and I'll just quote that if you wish — one of his recommendations under the section, pensions, was, and I quote:

We recommend the Government calculate its pension liability for each of its defined benefit pension plans using a consistent estimate for inflation.

Was that calculation done for its liability for each of those defined pension plans? That's of course over a year ago, and I'm just following up to see if that work had been done.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Chair, there are several parties who are involved in coming up with assumptions that they're using in order to estimate, you know, pension liabilities and so on. We encourage them to use a common set of assumptions, but not all of these people are actually under the direction and control of the Department of Finance.

So they will use the assumptions that are based upon the advice they get from professionals that they may be employing to give them advice. And that may vary from individual to individual, which isn't surprising because you'll see, for example, The Conference Board of Canada may estimate a certain rate of inflation that may be different from what the Royal Bank may say, which may be different from what Saskatchewan Finance will say.

And so generally speaking we encourage them to use common

assumptions. But they are not under our direct control, and so they will come up with assumptions which will vary according to the opinions of the expert advisers that they themselves employ in the teachers' pension plan, the Workers' Compensation Board, and so on.

And so while we understand the recommendation of the Provincial Auditor and have some sympathy for it — although we don't consider it to be a major problem — you will get some variations.

I think I could also add though, that another way to look at it would be you'd probably have a problem if the variations were very large. But most of the assumptions, if not all of them, tend to be within a certain reasonable range that most people would say well, they're all within a reasonable range and perhaps that's the best way to look at it.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chairman, I guess you realize I'm trying to get to the area of pensions generally, and maybe unfunded pensions.

But first of all I noticed that there was another recommendation in that report of 1999. And let me quote again:

We continue to recommend that the Government should establish a task force to study the many issues related to pension plans.

And now I notice in the year 2000, the spring report of 2000, a further note from the auditor saying that:

The Government has not yet established a pension plan task force.

And even though it's been recommended before, these issues may still be outstanding.

Is there an indication from yourself, Mr. Minister, that maybe that kind of a task force might be forthcoming to look at the very significant problem with these pension plans, particularly the unfunded portion of the pension plans?

(1645)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I had indicated, actually at the time the Provincial Auditor's report was released, I had publicly indicated that in fact we are undertaking a review with respect to the public sector pension plans. And we intend to return to the Public Accounts Committee with a report as to the review, and certainly follow up with a report back to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll be looking forward to that. As you may know, I sit on that committee so we'll be looking forward to that.

And with regards to the unfunded pension plan, the question that was posed by the auditor in 1999, and it's, I think, a continuing question: how and when the government will fund the unfunded pension liability of 2.9 billion?

And I noticed in the 2000 spring report there is an item showing

a graph that indicates the government would require about 200 million each year by the year 2003 to pay these pension plans. The numbers are becoming hugely significant. And I'm wondering what kind of control that you may want to put in place or is some kind of a guarantee or discussion paper that people that are depending upon these pensions are in fact confident that there is money there for them.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — There is some confusion that surrounds the issue in the sense that . . . and I'm sure the Provincial Auditor's office would agree. This is not a new issue. The issue of the unfunded pension liabilities in the province of Saskatchewan has been ongoing since actually about the 1930s. The unfunded liability has been accumulating since the 1930s.

And the reason I point that out is, when somebody says to me, what are you going to do to meet the unfunded pension obligations, you know, in the future; I say, well don't ask me what we're going to do, we are doing it. The province of Saskatchewan has been meeting the unfunded pension liability obligations each and every year going back many decades. And the Provincial Auditor is really pointing out that we're going to have to continue meeting the unfunded pension obligations as we have been doing and there's an expense to the taxpayers when you do that.

Having said that, I think it's important to say this: that the Government of Saskatchewan has always met its obligations to the people that have retired from the public service by meeting the pension obligation to them in the defined benefit plans that they have been a part of. And the Government of Saskatchewan will continue to meet its obligations so that they can rest assured that the pension they've been guaranteed continues to be paid.

Having said that, the question then is, well is there a plan to deal with the unfunded pension liabilities? And one thing that I had pointed out is that there is not only a plan, but that plan was actually implemented beginning in the mid-'70s.

Because in the mid-'70s, Mr. Blakeney as premier and Mr. Robbins as the minister of Finance — and we all owe them a great deal of gratitude — said, you know we have a continuing problem with unfunded liabilities, let's do something about it.

And what they did at that time was to say that every employee that entered the public service after a certain time — it might have been 1979 or 1980, I can't remember — went into a fully funded plan so that their contributions and the employer contributions would be matched. It would become a defined contribution plan rather than a guaranteed benefit plan, and there wouldn't be any unfunded liability for the taxpayers to worry about.

Had they not done that, the unfunded liability that we have would be even more astronomical than it is, and perhaps even unmanageable, and could have very disastrous consequences for the province and the taxpayers, not to mention people that need their pensions.

My point is, as a result of what was done in the 1970s, the problem of unfunded liabilities of pensions will eventually go away. It will go away in approximately the year 2060. That's a

long time, but it won't last forever as it otherwise would have. And it won't be nearly as big as it otherwise would have.

And I think after about the year . . . about 2015, it starts to decline. So instead of getting bigger, it gets smaller. So we've got 15 years of increase and then we've got 45 years of decrease, at which point it will eventually dwindle because the last person, who probably will be over 100 years old, will die. But so my point is that we have done a great deal actually to deal with this problem over the last few decades. There's some good planning that has gone on. The plan is that although the problem grows to 2015, it then becomes less and eventually it disappears.

Having said that, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't look at whether we can do better. And if we could do better, it would not involve I think getting rid of the problem all together; it would involve having some extra contributions today, say, to decrease the amount of contribution you might need to make in the year 2010 — something like that.

And I think we need to look at that, and I think also that we need to report back as part of the review that will go to the Public Accounts Committee whether there might be some way that we could smooth the bump. So let's have a look at that, and the department is currently examining that and studying it. We want to discuss that with the Public Accounts Committee and, Mr. Chair, the member, who is a member of that committee.

But I just repeat that this is not a new problem. It's a problem that is very much in hand, has been going on for many decades, and the real resolution was in the 1970s, because of the very good work that Mr. Blakeney, Mr. Robbins, and the Department of Finance did at that time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Chairman, the way you describe it, it sounds that the news is rather good. And so I'm anxious to, as part of the Public Accounts Committee, get a . . . And I think it's in compliance with one of the recommendations that the Department of Finance provide a report to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts showing how the government plans to address its future cash requirements for the pensions promised. So I'm looking forward to that.

The way you describe the problem as being addressed and will dissipate over time seems to be somewhat different than the alert that the Provincial Auditor is stating: that by the year 2011 for instance, the promised pensions, as he terms it, will grow to 400 million by that particular year and 500 million in fact by the year 2020.

That seems to be a little bit different than what you were describing to me a moment ago. Would you comment on that please, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, well I want to make it clear, Mr. Chair, to the member, I wouldn't want to suggest that I don't consider this to be a problem. I think it is a problem and we have to be concerned about it. And I think it's good that we're going to report to the Public Accounts Committee about it.

My point was simply to say that this is a problem that we've actually had for the last 70 years and to say that . . . when

people say, well can we deal with it? Well we've all been dealing with it for years and years. And I think it's important to realize that there also has been a plan in place to eliminate the problem over time and most of the problem in fact, let's say would be eliminated over the next 15 or 20 years.

Having said that, yes the Provincial Auditor is right that there are big sums of money that are required to meet the unfunded pension liabilities. But I would just remind the member, without minimizing the problem, that when you look at the problem in terms of constant dollars instead of, you know, just gross dollar figures, we're now paying \$220 million a year. Yes, it may grow to \$500 million by 2011, eleven years from now. But \$500 million in 2011 is a sum less than that today. I don't know what the sum is, but I think the member gets my point.

It will amount to, I'm advised, in real dollar terms about . . . in 2014 for example, \$282 million compared to, in real dollar terms, \$219 million today. So that although the payment may go from 219 million to 500 million, in constant dollar terms it really will go up from 219 to 282 — that doesn't mean it isn't a lot of money — and after that it will decline.

Revenues also tend to grow as the economy grows, so that it may become a smaller percentage of the provincial budget. And I don't say any of this to say that it's a problem that we should ignore or anything like that. I only say this, that it's a problem that we have a responsibility to manage.

And there's a plan in place which has analysed the problem. There's a plan in place to manage the problem to ensure that the public treasury has the funds available to meet the pension liabilities, as we have been doing, as I say, for the last 70 years and as we'll continue to do. There's a solid plan in place to make sure that we can meet that liability, and that certainly is what we will do.

At the same time, I believe that we need to examine whether we can maybe set a little bit of money aside to cushion the increase from the 220 to 280 essentially, in real dollar terms. If we could, for example, maybe the 220 today should be 230 and maybe if it was, then 10 years from now it would also be 230, something like that. And we need to have a serious look at that.

But in my opinion, given what has been done in the last 22 years and more, the problem actually is being very well managed.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Using the terms 20 years from now and so on, is a little more important to some of us than younger people. So those years go by pretty quickly for people like myself.

I'd like to, if I could, just quickly change to maybe one of my last areas of concern and that is the fact that . . . and I wanted to talk about the Vicq commission if I could for a moment. One of the questions that seems to me quite obvious, because the name of the Vicq commission, as we call it, is called the Personal Income Tax Review Committee, which I think was the original mandate, somehow got expanded to include other things like the PST (provincial sales tax).

Can you tell me was this committee mandated to expand their

review from the income tax? And at what stage of the process did that happen?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, their mandate was expanded and it was expanded at their request.

The member is correct. The name of the committee is the Personal Income Tax Review Committee. And I announced in the budget on March 26, 1999 that we would appoint a Personal Income Tax Review Committee to review personal income taxation in Saskatchewan. Then, I believe approximately May, the committee was appointed — which was Dr. Vicq, Shelley Brown, and Charlie Baldock.

And in the summer of 1999 after they began their work, the committee said to me — at their instigation, not mine — that they were forming the opinion that it was necessary to reduce income taxes in Saskatchewan by a larger sum than had been anticipated by us or by them, but that they felt that in order to maintain public services, there was a re-balancing necessary because our sales tax is much less here than it is in other provinces.

(1700)

And they asked for permission to examine the possibility of reducing incomes taxes more than they thought we could afford, but getting some new additional revenue from sales tax. And I said to them that we wanted to have their best opinion as to what we should do and that they should consider themselves free as an independent committee with no interference from government to give us, and indeed all members of the legislature and the public, their opinion as to what should be done and that they should feel free to say what they thought was right and correct and fair.

And so I gave them permission to do that. They then continued on with their work, ultimately produced their report which was made public on November 17, 1999. And the rest is history, as they say, and well-known to all of us.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I just have one more question, if I could, for now. Was other tax forms considered in a direction to that committee? For instance, the corporate income tax or property tax? And was an analysis done by anybody in your department based on the PST expansion?

And if any of those analyses were done, can they be made . . . can we table it so that we can all have benefit of those particular tables?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In answer to the question, Mr. Chair, no, we did not refer to them the question of corporate taxes and the like. It was designed to be a committee that would look at personal income taxation, and that was their mandate. And then as they expanded, to look at the sales tax as well, at their request as I described.

In terms of the question: does the department consider the impact that the PST expansion will have on the economy, the answer would be yes, in the same way that they would consider the impact on the economy that the reduced income taxes will have.

And what they try to do — and this isn't something where they publish a study that I can produce for the member — but we have a taxation and intergovernmental affairs division of the department and we have an economic policy branch of the department. And it's the job of those individuals on an ongoing basis — day after day, week after week, year after year — to take all of these things into account and then to present to the government, but also the opposition, along with the budget, their estimates of the rate of economic growth and inflation and so on.

And they will estimate that well, if you cut the income taxes as we're being told we should, it will have this effect on the economy. If you increase the sales tax, it will have this effect. The net impact will be this.

Obviously they think it's positive, and that's what they tell us and that we're going to have economic growth. And that seems to be the experience thus far as well, because we've seen the job numbers up considerably. And not just because of the budget, but they try to analyze the impact.

And so yes, they do that on an ongoing basis. There's no study that I have to produce to the member. What I get is advice from the officials to me which is budgetary advice that goes into the preparation of the budget and the presentation of information to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And, Mr. Chair, if I could, I'd like to thank the minister for his response, and certainly thank the officials that have come to help discuss these particular questions.

The Deputy Chair: — I want to thank the hon. member for Lloydminster and the minister and his officials.

Would someone like to move that we report progress?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — If I may, I just want to add to the member that we do, it's been pointed out to me, present a document called *A Plan for Growth and Opportunity: A Personal Tax Reform in Saskatchewan*, which is in fact the . . . some analysis from the Department of Finance, and that's presented to the legislature with the budget.

And I'd like to thank the hon. member for his assistance today and also the officials from the Department of Finance.

And with that, I'd like to move that we rise and report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 5:08 p.m.