

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 retain Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, people that have signed this petition are all from Semans.

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

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

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Drake and Lanigan.

I so present.

Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today signed by citizens asking for a ban on smoking in public places. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to legislate a total ban of smoking in all public places and workplaces in the province of Saskatchewan.

And in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the good people of Sommerville Road here in the constituency of Regina South.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition in regards to the health care in the province. 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 Lanigan and Guernsey.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of citizens petitioning the government to construct a tower for cellular telephone service. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to utilize the present SaskTel tower at Lake Alma to include usage for cellular telephones or to construct a new cellular telephone tower at Lake Alma, Saskatchewan.

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

And this is signed by folks in Minton, Gladmar, Lake Alma, and Radville.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to present a petition on behalf of the youth of Saskatchewan. And the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to pass comprehensive provincial legislation to prevent children from starting to smoke, to protect all citizens from second-hand smoke in public places and workplaces, and to control youth access to tobacco products.

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

I humbly present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of people in southeast Saskatchewan who would like to enjoy cellular telephone service. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to utilize the present SaskTel tower at Lake Alma to include usage for cellular telephones, or to construct a new cellular telephone tower at Lake Alma, Saskatchewan.

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks of Beaubier, Radville, Oungre, and Lake Alma.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of people that are concerned about lack of cellular service in their area. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to utilize the present SaskTel tower at Lake Alma to include usage for cellular telephones, or to construct a new cellular telephone tower at Lake Alma, Saskatchewan.

And this is signed on behalf of residents of Lake Alma, Beaubier, Carnduff, Radville, Regina, Tribune, Estevan,

Grenfell, and the great city of Weyburn.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a health care petition to present. 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 communities of Nokomis and Lanigan.

I so present.

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

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.

Signed by the people from Lanigan and area. Thank you.

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present on behalf of those seeking a ban on smoking in all public places:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to legislate a total ban of smoking in all public places and workplaces in the province of Saskatchewan.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This is on behalf of many young people in Regina.

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

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

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

The petitioners are from the community of Drake.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition this afternoon from citizens concerned about the massive deterioration of the Saskatchewan highway network. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide the necessary resources to restore the Paddockwood access road to an acceptable state.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people of Paddockwood.

I so present.

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

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

And the signatures on this petition are from Viscount and Meacham.

I so present.

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

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

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Lanigan, Jansen, Lockwood, Leroy and Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition to retain Lanigan and Watrous hospitals. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the good citizens of Lockwood, Lanigan, and Plunkett, Mr. Speaker.

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:

To ensure the Nokomis Health Centre, the Lanigan and Watrous hospitals, and the Cupar Health Centre remain

open;

To rescind the large increases in nursing home fees; and

To legislate a total ban of smoking in public places and workplaces.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 70 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways: regarding the portions of highways your department plans to revert to gravel this year, what is the traffic count on each one of these sections of highways?

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a notice of a question. I give notice I shall on day no. 70 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Sask Water: how much money has Sask Water invested in operations outside the province of Saskatchewan; are there consultants working on any Sask Water operations outside of Saskatchewan; and if there are, if you could provide detailed information, their salaries and names.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice of a written question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 70 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Highways: is your department developing a policy with regard to citizens wishing to fix highways on their own; will your department co-operate with citizens wishing to fix highways; if you do plan to co-operate, what form will this co-operation take.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a special member of my family, my uncle, Clement Wakefield, in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. My uncle is a very special person to me. He's not only an uncle, he's been a mentor and a friend all through my life.

And I should mention, Mr. Speaker, that my uncle, a veteran of the Second World War, and being part of the Signal Corps, he was one of the initial troops onto the beach at Juno Beach on D-Day. And subsequent for his valour, he was awarded personally a citation from Field Marshal Montgomery.

I'm very proud of my uncle. I wish the Assembly to wish him a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like everyone to help me welcome today, members of the Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association who are in the gallery today. And they're accompanied by the ex-old grey mayor, Larry Schneider, who's the CEO (chief executive officer) of

their corporation, and also to join me in thanking them for all the good work they do in helping to diversify rural Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you members of PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association) who are in your gallery this afternoon. These manufacturers in Saskatchewan are the backbone of many rural communities in Saskatchewan, and they are attending the Western Canada Farm Progress Show, and they're very concerned about the government's labour laws.

The Speaker: — Order. I'd just remind the hon. member, in introduction of guests, not to enter into a debate.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to add that many of us are wearing our pins which say, Please let us vote.

I'd like to introduce each individual member representing PIMA members in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

First there is Carol Vibert, from Harvest Industries in Craik, Saskatchewan; Greg Haukaas, Haukaas Industries, Mortlach; Brad Nelson, Honey Bee Manufacturing, Frontier; Greg Honey, Honey Bee Manufacturing, Frontier; Claude Bourgault, DryAir 2000, St. Brieux; Myrlen Klieboer, DryAir 2000; Diana Kiedrowski, DryAir 2000; Don Henry, Brandt Industries, Regina; Jim Carnago, Schulte Industries, Englefeld; Earl Schulte, Schulte Industries; Izaak Cruson, Dutch Industries; Loren Katzenberger, Precision Industries; Jerome Pratchler, Bay Trail Industries from Humboldt; Wilf Koender, Koender Windmills, Englefeld; Lionel Doepker, Doepker Industries; Bud Michel, Michel Industries, St. Gregor; and of course, Mr. Larry Schneider, CEO of PIMA.

Please join me in welcoming these people to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, if I might, I would be remiss if I did not also extend my own personal welcome, and I would hope that members would join with me again in extending a welcome to Larry Schneider of PIMA. It was my privilege to have served for six years on Regina City Council with Larry Schneider. He was the mayor; I was one of the members of council. And after that we parted company.

I made a turn towards the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan as a New Democratic Party member of the legislature. And Larry, as we know, went on to become a Progressive Conservative member of Brian Mulroney's cabinet. And I'm pleased to see that he's here today, and I'm pleased to see that our paths are crossing again.

I would ask all members to join me in wishing him a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would

like to add to the member from Redberry Lake's welcome to the PIMA members in the gallery.

I especially would like to welcome and say how pleased I am to see you here today, to all those manufacturers from the Humboldt-St. Brieux area. We have a great number of them that contribute to the province in that area and I think they deserve a great commendation for their work in enhancing economic growth in the province.

Mr. Speaker, Jerry Bourgeault also is present in the Speaker's gallery, as well as two other members that I can't quite identify from here, and we wouldn't want to forget anyone. So we ask the Assembly to please welcome all PIMA members once again.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join in the welcome of the PIMA members today. But I would like to put a little different angle on it. I sold many of the products that these people represent. They were excellent products and . . .

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Well thank you, but a good quality product is easy to sell, Mr. Speaker. And I think that these people represent some of the greatest innovation that Saskatchewan has to offer the agricultural community in this province and worldwide.

Now the name Greg Honey was mentioned in the introductions. I didn't see him in the group; it's a name that the Minister of Highways and the Deputy Premier should be familiar with today. And Mr. Brad Nelson is representing that company. They are the single most important employer and biggest manufacturer in my constituency, and I'm pleased to have Mr. Nelson here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, Dr. Glenn Veeman, who is in your Speaker's gallery. He is accompanied by his son, Chris Veeman, who is presently a ministerial assistant in the Minister of CIC's (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) office.

Chris is on his way to law school this fall after having a stint at the legislature. So I want to congratulate Chris in getting into law school and I also want to welcome Dr. Veeman to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Western Canada Farm Progress Show

Mr. Boyd: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the next few days the Western Canada Farm Progress Show is taking place here in Regina. And it is the premier agriculture

show — dryland agriculture show — for certainly North America and perhaps the world.

It features the latest products and services in agriculture, in dryland agriculture particularly; technology; innovation. It's certainly a beautiful day out there today after some rain across the province. So farmers will be taking advantage of the opportunity to come in to Regina and look over the latest innovations.

And certainly as a farmer myself, I'm like a kid in a candy store when I go over there — everything I see I want — and I'm probably no different than many farmers in that regard. The latest and the newest and the brightest pieces of equipment and services are available over there.

So I want to congratulate all involved in the organization of the Western Canada Farm Progress Show and certainly the exhibitors who spend a lot of money and time putting on the event for the farm people of Saskatchewan. It's a tremendous show, and I want to, on behalf of the official opposition, welcome all to Regina and the Western Canadian Farm Progress Show.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Increase in Wholesale Sales

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here we go again, Mr. Speaker — more good news for Saskatchewan.

It appears that the Leader of the Opposition has been out and about in the province again, Mr. Speaker, preaching his message of doom and gloom. But wherever he's been or whatever he's been up to, once again he's proved our theory, Mr. Speaker — the more he moans and puts down the provincial economy and our local businesses, the better it is for Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

This time it's the wholesale trade, courtesy of the rabid NDP (New Democratic Party) organization, StatsCanada, Mr. Speaker.

What do the stats say, Mr. Speaker? From April a year ago to this April, wholesale sales in Saskatchewan have increased by a whopping 23 per cent, Mr. Speaker — only the best in Canada, Mr. Speaker. I would think this means that Saskatchewan businesses are confident enough to build their inventories, Mr. Speaker.

However, the promised land of Alberta didn't do too badly — a mere 13 per cent. And Mike Harris's Ontario almost made double figures at a mere 9.5 per cent, Mr. Speaker. Just another snapshot with how we're doing in this province, Mr. Speaker.

I suppose we'll have to settle for being number one — with a 10 percentage point lead over Alberta, Mr. Speaker. But regardless of that, Mr. Speaker, this is good for our province.

Let's keep the opposition leader on the road talking of doom and gloom and the province will continue to prosper.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Aboriginal Day

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today in recognition of National Aboriginal Day.

Mr. Speaker, members on both sides of this House can appreciate the rich culture and heritage that Aboriginal people have to share with us. I would like to draw the Assembly's attention today to one particular Aboriginal entrepreneur who has taken the Native spirit and incorporated it into her clothing designs.

Mr. Speaker, Eva Lizotte from Saskatoon has designed a line of clothing that embraces both traditional European design and North American Indian traditions. She has had the opportunity to organize many fashion shows and currently is endeavouring to market her exclusive designs in Singapore, Germany, and Holland.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Lizotte's independent business has grown considerably over the past seven years, and one of her most recent accomplishments is that she is one of two women that can be credited with choreographing the dance routine taking place at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum today in recognition of National Aboriginal Day.

Mr. Speaker, there are also many other Aboriginal women that are breaking the barriers of conventional stereotypes such as Chief Laura Big Eagle of the Ocean Man Reserve. In 1997, Chief Big Eagle and her present council became the first all-female chief and council out of 73 bands in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, these vibrant and talented women, as well as many Aboriginal women across Canada, are to be commended for their ongoing dedication to promote accountable governance, peace, and respect and the cultural enhancement of our society.

The Chair: — Order. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kowalsky: — Today is National Aboriginal Day, Mr. Speaker and it's my pleasure to rise in the House to recognize it.

National Aboriginal Day was first proclaimed by Governor General Roméo LeBlanc in 1996. And June 21 is a fitting day. It is a summer solstice — the day of the longest light and the shortest dark, the day when many Aboriginal peoples traditionally celebrate their culture and heritage.

This occasion gives all Aboriginal people the opportunity to share their culture and heritage with fellow Canadians. And it also gives non-Aboriginal people the chance to honour and celebrate all of the contributions Aboriginals have made to this country and its society.

And the Aboriginal peoples have made many contributions, Mr. Speaker. Their spectacular artistry, both in the performing and visual arts, enriches the multicultural fabric of Canadian society.

And all of us can learn from the Aboriginal people's holistic world view. It is a view that honours and respects the earth, and a view that honours and respects each member of society, and a view that values the relationship between people and the rest of nature.

As we move into a new millennium, we celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal peoples in the past. We value the contributions they are making today, and we look forward to the future. It will be a future in which partnership and respect, between Aboriginal peoples and non-Aboriginals, will continue to grow and strengthen and continue to create a better society for all of us . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskPower Transmission System

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During the election last fall and since that time, members on this side of the House have committed to endeavour to practice a new style of politics. Part of that pledge includes a commitment to acknowledge actions and positions taken by political opponents that are positive for our constituents.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the Assembly to congratulate the minister responsible for SaskPower and his colleagues for his announcement on Monday that monopoly restrictions on the SaskPower transmission system would be lifted. This is particularly good for the two Saskatchewan cities that had the vision and foresight to retain their own electrical utilities back in the 1960s.

While Swift Current and Saskatoon have been able to operate profitable and successful electrical utilities, SaskPower's monopoly has meant that the Crown corporation and only the Crown could sell these cities the bulk power.

With the minister's announcement on Monday, these two communities are free to explore other sources of power on behalf of their taxpayers and customers. And perhaps most importantly the city of Swift Current, along with Saskatoon, can look at generating their own power. The revenue implications and the potential for economic development through generation and cogeneration are now at least part of the potential of these two great communities.

On behalf of my constituents who live in the city of Swift Current, I would like to offer my thanks to the minister and the government for this positive decision.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Weyburn Tree-Planting Program

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform the Assembly about an exciting project taking place in southeast Saskatchewan. A new Weyburn tree-planting program designed to combat soil erosion and help local farmers is being carried out by area school children.

Producers agree to give up 15 metres of their land that borders the Souris River and allow the program to convert it to permanent cover. This conversion from farmland helps prevent silt from running into the river.

The program has many important goals: to stop wind and water erosion on farms, to clean up the Souris River by stopping the soil from running into it, to promote biodiversity, and to educate our youth about environmental concerns.

The two-year tree planting program kicked off in April with grades 4 through 9 students from Griffin, Saskatchewan planting eight varieties of trees on various erosion areas at Mainprize Park, where the valley has been recently landscaped and there is no grass or trees.

There are at least 20 sponsors for the program, Mr. Speaker, with trees coming from Shand nurseries and the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration). A number of RMs (rural municipality) have provided mechanical tree planters, and land owners will provide the tractors to pull them.

Twenty schools are participating, including Weyburn, Fillmore, Griffin, Benson, Estevan, and as far away as Rocanville and Crane Valley.

Mr. Speaker, let us congratulate all the students who are taking part in this very important project.

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Legislative Assembly Staff Long Service Awards

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to congratulate all of those members of the legislative staff that received long service awards today.

Mr. Speaker, these individuals have been valued members of this Assembly for many years, and without their hard work and dedication, this House would not run as smoothly as it does.

Mr. Speaker, the 10 years of service awards went to: Ms. Cheryl Behrns, Ms. Onnolee Rafoss, Ms. Darlene Trenholm from *Hansard*; and Ms. Allison Gartner with the Law Clerk's office.

The 15-year service awards went to Mr. Ben Block, Mr. Floyd Goertz with the Sergeant-at-Arms office; and Ms. Iris Lang, Sandra Yungwirth with administration services; and Laura Pogue from the Legislative Library; and Arnold McKenzie from visitor services.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, the 20-year service award went to Ms. Barbara Lindenbach from *Hansard*.

I ask that all the members of the Assembly join with me in congratulating these outstanding members of our legislative family. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Gaming minister. Madam Minister, at the news conference earlier today, Chief Perry Bellegarde indicated that the SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) board found out about the missing \$360,000 about a month ago and passed a preliminary motion at that time to try to legitimize these expenses.

Madam Minister, when did SIGA first learn of this matter? And when did the Liquor and Gaming Authority first learn of this matter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I can't speak for the SIGA board. I can say that on Wednesday, late Wednesday, June 8 — 7 or 8 — the external auditor in the preliminary working papers discovered the information in question, immediately contacted the Provincial Auditor, who then contacted Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority on Friday morning. I was informed then and awaited confirmation rather than acting on speculation or information passed on in an unofficial way.

I received official confirmation from the Provincial Auditor in writing June 14, Wednesday the 14th. I then made the statement to the public Friday morning of the 16th.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Madam Minister, I'm sure the Provincial Auditor must have addressed these matters in his letter to you.

According to the Provincial Auditor, when did KPMG first learn of the missing \$360,000; when did KPMG first notify the SIGA board; when did KPMG first notify the Provincial Auditor; and when did the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority first learn of the missing money?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't have the exact times before me, but I can say, as I said in the first reply, that the KPMG auditor in their very preliminary working stages on the audit for the fall identified the concerns at hand. That was Wednesday, June 7 or 8. They then talked to the Provincial Auditor.

The Provincial Auditor alerted Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, who then wanted to conduct interviews to confirm that information. The information was passed then to the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians asking for confirmation.

The Provincial Auditor then sent me a letter, June 14 — Wednesday, June 14 — outlining the two concerns that I brought forward Friday morning, last Friday morning in the statement to the public, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No matter what question I ask I seem to get the same rhetoric.

So, Madam Minister, since you're not prepared to answer these questions, I'm sure the Provincial Auditor has answered them in his letter to you. Will you table that letter today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I will obtain the auditor's letter as quickly as I can and provide it to the member opposite.

I want to emphasize that this was very early on in the working papers of the auditor, KPMG, who then alerted the Provincial Auditor. Mr. Speaker, the system that we had in place works. It was working when we received the information. We worked. It's working. We acted swiftly, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Madam Minister, the new Chair of the SIGA board talked about a focused inquiry. Those were his words:

A focused inquiry will be conducted by the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Licensing Authority . . . and the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

Madam Minister, why does he mean by a focused inquiry? Are you and SIGA trying to limit the scope of his inquiry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I have also mentioned in my statement last Friday, and I will restate, an auditing team has been assembled. The auditing team will work in close association with the Provincial Auditor. I know that SIGA wants to conduct its own audit, but they also said that they would co-operate fully with the SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) auditing team and provide full information. The auditing process is underway, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Madam Minister, I hope the Provincial Auditor is included on that auditing team. But this scandal has shaken the confidence of Saskatchewan people. It has shaken the confidence people have in SIGA. It has shaken confidence people have in this government's management of gaming. And now we learn that SIGA may have known about this much earlier than anyone expected.

Madam Minister, that is why this audit should have as broad as scope as possible, to restore confidence in the Saskatchewan gaming industry. Madam Minister, what mandate will you be providing to the auditors? Will they be looking into the actions of all the SIGA board of directors and not just Dutch Lerat?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the statement made by the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan

Indian Nations) at noon today indicating that they will comply fully with SLGA's directives and co-operate fully and comply fully with our auditing process.

The audit team, Mr. Speaker, will review all aspects of the issues identified. They will be the same that we use in normal auditing processes that will include system controls; it will include actions taken by SIGA; it'll include the actions by the CEO and the board of directors and key staff, Mr. Speaker.

It's a full, transparent audit process by a team of fully competent auditors working in coordination and co-operation with our Provincial Auditor. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Eagles: — Has the Provincial Auditor made any recommendations regarding the scope of this inquiry? And what does the Provincial Auditor say with regard to the mandate of this audit?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, the auditor has now become part of the auditing team and will work in full co-operation with them.

I, as I stated, am very much acknowledging and encouraged by the full compliance from the FSIN.

Mr. Speaker, as their Chair, Mr. Merasty said he's not going to speculate on the details or the status of the audit. It's left in the hands of the independent auditors, the Provincial Auditor, and we don't want to interfere in any way with the auditors teams' ability to do their work, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Union Certification Process

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question's for the Minister of Labour.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Party has introduced legislation which will allow employees to vote by secret ballot on union certification, decertification, and strike action.

Presently in this province, employees vote by secret ballot on whether or not to decertify, but the original certification process is not done this way. Many employees involved in a union certification drive feel a secret ballot would remove employees from feeling caught in the middle between union and their employer.

Madam Minister, this would make the whole unionization process completely democratic. Will you support this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will say to the member is that the process for certification has the identical rules to the process for decertification.

Now the fact of the matter is, is that there are I believe four provinces in Canada where there is a second vote — which is the vote you're talking about — there's a second that takes place on certifications. But the number of certifications that occur in those provinces is essentially in the same ratio as the number that occur in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to know what the minister's afraid of. What is she scared of in a secret ballot?

Mr. Speaker, not only do employees want the right to a secret ballot, but they also want the right to hear both sides of the story. Under the current Trade Union Act, employers are prohibited from explaining the effects unionization will have on the business.

We are proposing amendments to The Trade Union Act which will provide freedom of speech within the workplace. If an employee is considering signing a union card and they have questions of the employer, the employer will be able to freely give information to that worker without facing retribution from the union relation . . . Labour Relations Board.

Madam Minister, this is a fundamental right of democracy. Will you support the amendments to The Trade Union Act which will allow freedom of speech in the workplace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, certainly this is a matter for the House to decide. But what I will say to the member opposite is the last time The Trade Union Act was reviewed was in 1994, and at that time it was a process chaired by Ted Priel with representation from Mike Carr on the business side and from Hugh Wagner on the labour perspective.

And that this was a coming together of their best view of the industrial relations that would best recognize the needs of employees and the needs of employers in what is often and recognizably a very difficult situation.

But the fact of the matter is that since 1944 no government at any stripe has decided to change this provision. And certainly I will indicate that it does not prohibit the union or the employer from discussing anything with the employees as long as the intention isn't to interfere, restrain, intimidate, threaten or coerce.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my appeal is to the Premier. Mr. Premier, please come to your senses. Think about what the Prairie Implement Manufacturing Association means to Saskatchewan. Think about what the Saskatchewan Alliance for Economic Growth means to this province. Think about the jobs, Mr. Premier. Think about the huge contribution that they have made to this province, the taxes that they pay.

And what are they asking you for, Mr. Premier? They're asking

for a meeting — a meeting before you barge ahead with Bill 59. They want to have a meeting to talk about labour reforms, legislative reforms to labour legislation we have.

Mr. Premier, considering their contribution to this province and considering your responsibility as a Premier, will you meet with them? Will you have a discussion? Will you put some partisan politics aside and actually do what's good for Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I say with the greatest of respect to the Leader of the Opposition who served in the House of Commons and serving in this House, that I frankly don't understand the question that he advances. Because as I understand, the only piece of legislation before this House at the current time is legislation dealing with the so-called double breasting in the construction labour industry operation.

Now what these people opposite I think are getting at is an amendment to The Trade Union Act on the right of the employer to address the employees in the course of a certification drive. That is his argument, which is not before the House and the legislation. The legislation is private.

Now what the Minister of Labour has said is the fact. In the vast majority of the provinces of this country, the Canadian labour law, there is the right of the employer to speak during certification with some exemptions and some exceptions, as he's outlined. That's the law and in the result we have worked together with PIMA, and with business, and trade unions to make this the fastest-growing province in Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, it's all right to make these platitudes, but let's look at the facts. Major industries in Saskatchewan are thinking about leaving this province. If they leave this province they take jobs with them — and you know that the population is decreasing in Saskatchewan.

They take tax revenue from Saskatchewan. It shrinks your tax base and that means you have to raise taxes. It means you can't fix the highways. It means you can't fix health care. It's a blight on your record.

Mr. Premier, will you do the right thing and have a fair, labour environment in Saskatchewan so we can keep these industries here and so we can actually build our province and tell our young people there's a reason to stay here?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, the leader of the so-called Saskatchewan Party has his facts wrong again.

The June 12, 2000 — not Roy . . . not my figures, not the government, coalition government figures — but Statistics Canada's figures show that the Saskatchewan economy has created an average of 13,100 new jobs in the first five months of this year. Not the job losses that the leader is talking about.

Mr. Speaker, 13,100 jobs a month in the first five months of this year, coupled with job training programs, skills training programs, and tax reductions — which I might add you voted against, every one of you voted against personal income tax increases. All of his facts to do not jive with what the reality is according to StatsCanada.

We want to work with PIMA, employers, and the working men to keep our . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we want to talk about the facts. And the facts are that industries like Bourgault Industries, Doepker Industries, and other prairie manufacturers are thinking about their future in this province.

The fact is that in the last 12 months, 16,000 people have left Saskatchewan when Alberta's population has grown by thousands, and even Manitoba has seen a 6,000 person increase.

Mr. Premier, this is serious stuff. We're not playing politics. We're talking about the future of Saskatchewan. We're talking about jobs and taxes and prosperity . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order. All hon. members I was not able to hear a question. Hon. Leader of the Opposition, will you pose your question?

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, what I was trying to impress upon the Premier is that this is serious. We need to do the right thing. We need to forget about our union contributions; we need to forget about some debts we owe. We need to think about the future of Saskatchewan.

Will you do the right thing and fix the poisonous labour relationships and environment that you and your government has created in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize to this House, to the people in the gallery and the people in the province of Saskatchewan, that there has not been a change to The Trade Union Act of Saskatchewan for . . . Since 1994 — no change.

We've done nothing there to . . . We've done nothing to make the atmosphere poisonous — we've done nothing. And in the result . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I wasn't able to hear the question; now I'm unable to hear the answer. Kindly allow one another the respect to allow the answers and the questions to both be heard. Hon. members, I ask you please.

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. No change in The Trade Union Act to which this member is talking about. And since 1994 to the year 2000, we have seen the figures that I just gave a few moments ago — roughly approximating 14,000 jobs for five months in the year 2000.

And he goes up and he says we've created a poisonous atmosphere. There hasn't been one change at all to the Labour Relations Board. In fact this province is growing.

Now that Doepker or some company has a problem with respect to certification, that's got to be straightened out by the employer and the employees in accordance with the law which has existed since 1994.

What the fact is, is that we have seen this province on an unprecedented rate of growth, and we want to do it in partnership and in co-operation. And we want you to do the right thing and stop politicking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Highway Maintenance

Mr. Brkich: — On Monday I attended a meeting in the village of Tugaska where representatives from over 20 towns, villages, and RMs from the immediate area had gathered.

The Speaker: — Order, order, please. Please, I ask you. While the question is being asked, it can't be heard if there's heckling going on both ways. And I'm sure who's asking the question . . . whoever is asking . . . the member asking the question wants it to be heard in order that the person that's to answer can hear it as well. Please co-operate.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start from the beginning. My question is for the Minister of Highways. On Monday I attended a meeting in the village of Tugaska where representatives from over 20 towns, villages, and RMs from the immediate area had gathered.

They met to discuss the poor conditions of Highways 19 and 42 and their fears that the provincial government intended to turn these highways back to gravel. There was a very good meeting, Mr. Speaker, but it was very disappointing that the Minister of Highways chose not to attend even though he'd been invited. Not only did he not attend but he didn't send anyone else from his department either. This, Mr. Speaker, this is a slap in the face to those community leaders.

Mr. Minister, why didn't you or anyone else from your staff attend this meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member for the question as well. The member well knows he brought this meeting to my attention Friday just before the noon hour. It was the first time I'd even heard about the meeting, Mr. Speaker.

We immediately responded sending a letter back to the community. Mr. Speaker, I was unable to attend because of prior commitments and that commitment was, Mr. Speaker, my attendance, which we had arranged some eight to ten months in advance of the Sixth International Symposium on Heavy Vehicle Weights and Dimensions in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker,

and the member was well aware of that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you what was involved in the meeting in Saskatoon, Mr. Speaker. We had representation at that meeting, Mr. Speaker, from across the world, Mr. Speaker, who came to Saskatchewan to see what wonderful things our Department of Transportation was doing, Mr. Speaker, the innovative things that the department is doing here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When we brought up concerns of other communities about local highways, the minister stood in this House and said he would be working closely with these communities to discuss these solutions. He had officials travel to Val Marie to meet with people there. His staff has talked to the residents of Climax, but he chose not to send any of his staff to Tugaske. He chose to completely ignore an organized meeting of 20 towns, villages, and RMs.

I don't know, maybe you wouldn't attend this meeting on Monday, Minister, because you didn't want to drive the highways going out there, or maybe your staff didn't want to. Unfortunately I guess there wasn't an airport there that you could fly there.

Mr. Minister, a delegation of some of these people who met on Monday, will be requesting a meeting with you within the next week to discuss the conditions of futures of Highway 19 and 42. Will you give a commitment today in the House to meet with them next week?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I encourage the member not to play politics with these difficult issues, Mr. Speaker. But the member also knows, and I will repeat it again, I was in attendance as were many, many of my officials who arranged this very large symposium in Saskatoon, the sixth international symposium on heavy haul vehicles. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the member as well some of the interesting things.

People from Australia, Mr. Speaker, wanted to know about our transportation partnership program, Mr. Speaker. People from New Zealand, Mr. Speaker, wanted to know about our central tire inflation systems, Mr. Speaker.

And believe it or not, Mr. Speaker — believe it or not — people from Alberta wanted to know about our thin membrane surfaced road, Mr. Speaker, and how we spend as little money as we do and still are able to allow the heavy traffic that we do on those roads, Mr. Speaker. People from Alberta were interested in what we do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, the people who attended the meeting at Tugaske represent an area of diverse economy. Agriculture of course is very important, but tourism, manufacturing, processing industries are also very important to this area of the province. They rely heavily on Highways 19 and 42, and feel that the key to economic development in the area

are these highways.

One RM has already lost a potential feedlot project because the developer said the conditions of the road would cost him too much in bad roads, trucking . . . and trucking charges, and just damage to trucks.

They believe any conversion of these highways to gravel would not help that situation, and in fact, would put an end to any future economic development.

Mr. Minister, will you . . . I'll ask again, will you make commitment to meet . . . or some of your staff to meet with these people next week when they come up, and give your commitment that the Highways 19 and 42 will not be reverted to gravel?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again, Mr. Speaker, I've made the commitment that I or my officials would meet with any community that wants to meet with me. But on that short of notice, Mr. Speaker, when we had an international symposium, it was absolutely impossible. And we conveyed that message late Friday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, to the member, we've made the commitment that we would meet with them. My understanding is that we will be meeting with those communities this coming Monday. And if subsequent meetings are required, which would involve myself as well, I've agreed to do that as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Well, I'm glad to hear that you will attend that meeting on Monday. It's too bad that you didn't take the time to attend the meeting on the last Monday, because there were many good ideas and proposals discussed.

These are not unreasonable people, Mr. Minister. They are business people, entrepreneurs, farmers, municipal representatives — all concerned about the future of their livelihoods; livelihoods which rely on these highways for their success, if not their survival.

These people would be very happy to hear that the Department of Highways even had a long-term plan for these highways. Any type of a plan to repair the pavements on Highways 19 and 42.

They would even be willing to . . . to say it could be done over a number of years, a few miles a year. They just want to hear if you've any idea at all for these highways and what your long-range plans are for them. Mr. Minister, will you present these communities with a long-term paving plan for Highways 19 and 42?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Again I say to the member, Mr. Speaker, what would he have myself or my officials do . . . at a symposium in Saskatoon that we have spent huge amounts of resources by way of personnel in arranging, where we have

people from across the world, Mr. Speaker, coming to see what Saskatchewan is doing.

When I get a notice of a meeting late Friday afternoon that I should attend, he would suggest that I should pull all of my officials and myself away from that meeting. It makes no sense, Mr. Speaker. They're here to see . . . people from Australia and New Zealand were here to see what we do, Mr. Speaker, with respect to central tire inflation.

People from Alberta were here to see what we do with respect to thin membrane surfaces and our road and rail program, Mr. Speaker. People from France wanted to know about our transportation program, Mr. Speaker. They wanted to know about all the good things that the Department of Highways and Transportation is doing here in Saskatchewan — unlike those folks, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, by leave I wish to make a statement concerning National Aboriginal Day.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

National Aboriginal Day

Hon. Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to members of the Assembly. I rise today to recognize a day of great significance to Saskatchewan and to Canada. Today is National Aboriginal Day and on this day we recognize the contributions and heritage that Aboriginal people have contributed to this nation.

The theme for this year's celebration is, Diversity: The Strength of All Nations. This theme is as true for Saskatchewan as it is for all of Canada. In arts, culture, education, business and commerce, and in the emerging high-tech world our Aboriginal community is enriching this province.

We recognize First Nations and Metis contributions throughout our history, in contemporary Saskatchewan, and the contribution we know they will make to our shared future. The Government of Saskatchewan wants Aboriginal citizens to be full and confident participants in the provincial economy. We want them to realize their full potential as part of this magnificent province, a province built on the strength of diversity.

Cree, Dené, Saulteaux, Assinboine, Dakota, and Nakota, the First Nations that inhabited this land since time immemorial and who welcomed the first visitors, established a relationship of mutual co-operation and friendship that guides us to the present day.

The Metis are perhaps the first new Canadians — a community of different peoples, languages, and cultures. To a great extent they established the model of a cultural mosaic we see in Canada and Saskatchewan today. The country we love and the bright future we see for our children is in large part a result of a convergence of people in this land and the decision to forge our

future together. We are the beneficiaries of that vision.

The motto of our province is found on our coat of arms and reads, *Multis E Gentibus Vires*, "from many peoples, strength". This is the message we wish to echo today. In diversity we find strength, and in this province we recognize the significance of what we are together and our potential for the future.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan I extend our very, very best wishes to all Aboriginal peoples on this National Aboriginal Day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 215 – The Referendum and Plebiscite Amendment Act, 2000

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 215, The Referendum and Plebiscite Amendment Act, 2000.

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

Bill No. 223 — The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2000

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the first reading of Bill No. 223, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I rise prior to orders of the day under rule 46 requesting for an emergency motion on the unfair labour laws in Saskatchewan.

MOTION UNDER RULE 46

Unfair Labour Laws in Saskatchewan

Mr. Weekes: — The motion, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government to implement legislation providing Saskatchewan workers with a secret ballot prior to union certification or decertification, and to allow workers to get all the information prior to deciding on certification, and further urges the Premier to meet with the representatives of the business community prior to passing damaging labour legislation in Saskatchewan.

And the member from Kindersley seconds this motion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to just emphasize that we do something about these unfair labour . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I will require the motion.

Mr. Weekes: — I move:

That this Assembly urges the provincial government to implement legislation providing Saskatchewan workers with a secret ballot prior to union certification or decertification, and to allow workers to get all the information prior to deciding on certification, and further urges the Premier to meet with the representatives of the business community prior to passing damaging labour legislation in Saskatchewan.

Leave not granted.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being an open and accountable government, I'd like to respond to question number 188, the most important question the members brought forward.

For the members opposite a pumpjack is a piece of equipment normally used in oil fields to pump oil. A musical pumpjack makes music.

The Speaker: — The answer to question 188 is tabled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Being an open, accountable government, I'd like to table the response to question 189 and, with leave, questions 190 through 196 as well, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The Government Deputy Whip has tabled answers to questions 190 through 196 inclusive.

Order. Order. I will ask all hon. members to please come to order. Would hon. members from both sides take their debates behind the bar or outside of the room, please. We can't hear what the Clerk is calling under government orders for adjourned debates — that's the time to debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 82

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 82 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me, Mr. Speaker, to be able to add some comments to the

amendments of this particular Act. This is The Income Tax Act and The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2000.

This particular Act really focuses on the problems that we're experiencing, particularly in this problem . . . in this province, focusing on the tax and the disadvantage that we have here in this province with the income tax.

The proposal over the next period of time to have The Income Tax Act . . . the income tax decreasing, giving Saskatchewan advantage, is a commendable objective, Mr. Speaker, because in fact that is one of the leading issues that the Saskatchewan Party has been putting forward for a long period of time. We think that that is an essential ingredient.

The problem that we have with the tax, Mr. Speaker, is that the reduction in tax which will be in the future — and in fact in the situation where they indicate maybe two to three years from now — we'll have to have faith that there will be a reduction in income tax. The problem, Mr. Speaker, is right now.

And the situation right now with the income tax is that there is overall a tax increase offsetting any particular decrease that was put forward in this particular year. That is not giving the right signals to our industry. That is not giving the right signals to economic growth in this province and there is a lot of issues that can be shown in the constituency that I'm from, Mr. Speaker, in that those decisions are being made today. They're being made almost hourly. There is no time to make those decisions and have faith that things will turn around in two or three years from now.

The whole point of a tax decrease, Mr. Speaker, is that in fact money stays in the pocket of the taxpayer. The actual taxpayer then has the opportunity to spend the money as he sees fit and not the way that the government collects it and spends where they think is the right way to go.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that we have is that people are in fact leaving this province. The statistics have shown that. A recent Canada statistics have shown that there is in fact 1,600 people left this province in this last year. Now the number is in fact the worst record — the worst record, Mr. Speaker — in Canada.

Newfoundland also had a reduction of people but they actually lost less people than here in Saskatchewan. And to a large extent the problem is the lack of immediacy in trying to address the tax problems here in Saskatchewan.

Prior to the last election, Mr. Speaker, it was shown by the NDP government that in fact a tax reduction was not a priority. As the election campaign progressed, all of a sudden there was a revelation that taxes may become an election issue and were an important factor after all.

And as it has turned out, they in fact were correct; it is a priority issue and it has to be addressed and addressed substantially.

I noticed as well in the provincial election, that the Liberal Party, who are now part of this coalition, argued steadfastly that tax relief for Saskatchewan residents was not an urgency and not a priority. Well times have certainly changed. And I think the Minister of Finance has in fact discovered that this is an

important issue, it is an important item and we must proceed with this.

And I commend them for the direction. I have problems with the timing of this reduction in taxes.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of taxes that in fact are put back onto the people even though there is an indication of a small tax decrease in this coming year. And again I commend the minister for that — reducing the flat tax is a good example. But there are so many other indications that the tax in fact has been expanded.

What we need to do is give confidence to our business community. We need to give confidence to those people who are going to be investing in this province, that want to invest and develop commercially in this province that there is a direction, there is plan, and there is a vision that will, in fact, give incentives to this development and not disadvantages. Because as you know, the urgency of the situation is, in fact, a competitive disadvantage for Saskatchewan against our neighbouring provinces.

And again, where I'm from, that is a very obvious and direct comparison made on a daily basis where these decisions are made.

The income tax being a very large part of this, but other tax implications are very evident when, in fact, investments and investment opportunities come to a city like Lloydminster. The company that wants to invest looks at the area, and even the area of my constituency is a very vibrant and growing community, but when these companies look at the map for establishing their business, there is a division right down the border and on one side of the map it is showing a black mark with the implication, tax implications marked over top of it. That is common knowledge in my constituency and in fact that is a real problem.

We have to address other issues of taxation, corporate tax, as an example. We have to make sure that the property taxes are also addressed to make sure that they are contributing and not being a disadvantage to investment in this particular province.

Whenever we talk about a tax reduction, I think people just don't look at the income tax portion. They have to look at the global tax and the environment of taxation in a particular province. And when they've looked at it in Saskatchewan, they see that maybe there is a reduction in the personal income tax, as small as it is this year, but there are other forms of taxation as well.

And any money that is offsetting in terms of tax saving will in fact be taken back in increased taxation or rates for our utilities — particularly SaskPower, Sask Energy, SaskTel. Those in fact are an increased cost to the people, maybe not termed a direct taxation, but the effect is certainly the same and becomes a disincentive.

When the government has decided to make these tax breaks, they make sure that there's a lot of media and acclamation about the prospect of these tax breaks working within a balanced budget.

Balanced budgets again, is a very commendable objective, but when you look at the overall tax environment, I think you have to see that much of that tax break that is being proposed through The Income Tax Act is certainly taken back in the downloading that is put forward to communities — not only in the municipal amounts that are received from the government. Municipal governments are struggling to maintain their services and certainly the roads in the municipality are an issue at this particular point.

There's downloading, Mr. Speaker, in underfunding to the education system as has been debated and shown in this particular session of the legislature. And that downloading certainly has been noticed by the taxpayers in the constituencies and in the regions to the point where tax revolts have been conducted in many, many of the school divisions and municipalities. That is a true indication of the feeling of the taxpayer frustration and downloading.

Again, in the large environment of taxation you can't just isolate income tax. The whole environment has to be looked at.

Health issues are certainly another item that is very timely and there's a lot of frustration and concern over the amount of money that has been withdrawn from the health system over the last period of time. And that certainly has to be addressed. Whenever we talked to constituents, health rates right up at the beginning of some of their priorities. And that has to be considered as part of the overall tax environment.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I'm looking at The Income Tax Act and the amendments that we're speaking to here, I have a lot of concerns. A lot of these issues have been brought up and debated in other speeches with regards to other aspects of the Bills and amendments that have been put forward. I wanted to make sure that I was able to highlight some of these particular concerns when we're talking about the debate on second reading of this particular Bill.

Now I wanted to also mention that the particular problem that we have in Saskatchewan is not only a stagnation of numbers, in fact it varies up a little bit, down a little bit. Right now we're seeing that the numbers of people in the province have decreased while our neighbouring provinces have in fact been expanding considerably.

As has been mentioned before in some of these debates, the population level in this province has been almost stagnant for some 40 or 50 years.

While other provinces — and Canada particularly — has at least doubled their population in that time, and some of the provinces have more than doubled and tripled, I think that's an indication of where people want to go. That is a choice that people are making. And if the argument is that well, it's not much different on either side of the border, the fact is that people decide with their feet and they will make the assessment on their own behalf, and they will make the move accordingly.

What we have to do using tools such as The Income Tax Act and other tools that I've referred to earlier, we have to make the environment much more friendly to the development. We have to attract businesses. We have to attract the economy.

It is that growth that will be the key to attracting our workers, our young people, and in fact not sending them out of the province.

If we can accomplish that and at least give enough confidence in the vision and the direction, then we have gone a great deal forward from where we are now. Because that vision and direction has not been evident and there are urgencies to putting that vision and direction in place.

Some of the jobs that have been created in Saskatchewan in comparison to the number of jobs outside of Saskatchewan, is a very small fraction. But even the jobs that have been created here have not been the high-paying and therefore high-taxable incomes that other provinces have been reaping the benefit from — what we have been exporting out of this particular province.

Mr. Speaker, these issues are very much the centre of this particular tax Bill. And again I want to commend the minister for the direction that we're going.

I must say that we have gone not far enough. We have gone too little and too late because there is an urgency. Two years, three years, four years from now, "trust this attitude" is just not going to make it in terms of confidence and vision because those decisions are made almost, as I mentioned, daily and certainly within this particular year.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be able to address some of these issues more fully when we get into Committee of the Whole. And so at this point I would conclude my remarks and — hoping that we'll be able to address these in committee — and I recommend that we move this one forward.

Oh, I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, if I could, before I sit down. I would move:

That we now go to Bill No. 234, The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2000 (Freedom of Speech in the Workplace).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 2:51 p.m. until 3:01 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

Nays — 30

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	MacKinnon	Lingenfelter
Melenchuk	Cline	Atkinson

Lautermilch	Thomson	Lorje
Serby	Belanger	Nilson
Crofford	Hillson	Kowalsky
Sonntag	Hamilton	Prebble
Jones	Higgins	Yates
Harper	Axworthy	Junor
Kasperski	Wartman	Addley

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is that Bill No. 82, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2000 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I brought this to the attention of the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, in your gallery today as you will see, is a very large and distinguished group. I'm going to introduce two of them at the end of my remarks because they're — I suppose one could say the leaders, although they're all leaders — but the formal leaders of the delegation.

This group to this Assembly today in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, come from Ukraine. The International Finance Corporation, which is a member of the World Bank Group, has asked, invited, that this Ukrainian delegation come to Saskatchewan as part of the farm reorganization project in Ukraine and land privatization project in Ukraine.

Thirty-five Ukrainian farmers, processors, and legislators will be spending the week touring Saskatchewan farms and processing operations. They will also have the opportunity to attend the Western Canadian Farm Progress Show that is being held this week in Regina.

I'm sure that I speak on behalf of all members when I say that we're very pleased to have them with us today and truly hope that they enjoy their visit to Saskatchewan.

Before I ask the Premier and the Minister of Agriculture to stand, before I do, may I just be permitted a brief second or two to add a personal word. I was very honoured to be over in Ukraine in 1995 and had the pleasure of meeting the president of the Ukraine, President Kushma at that time, Prime Minister Marchuk, and the Minister of Agriculture, and other senior officials.

The visit, members of the Assembly, took me to Kiev, to Chernivtsi, and to the Lviv. Lviv happens to be the largest centre where my parents farmed, closest to where my parents farmed. My parents farmed about 40 kilometres slightly north and east of Lviv in . . . (inaudible) . . . At the time the Premier of that oblast. was . . . (inaudible) . . . I don't know whether he's still there as the Premier but certainly we had a very important visit. And they come from the Ukrainian farm background. His dad came over. His timing wasn't the best. It was about 1929, 1930, but nonetheless he has still some roots there, had some roots in that regard.

I want to introduce to you, Mr. Speaker, therefore, and to extend a very big welcome and ask him to stand first: the Premier from the Volyn Oblast, Premier Vitaliy Zaremba. And also the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Dmytruk Pavlovich, the Minister of Agriculture here.

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

Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — With leave to welcome guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. Hermanson: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to add my words of welcome to those that the Premier has extended to the delegation from the Ukraine, 35 farmers and processors. In Saskatchewan I'm a farmer, so we have some things in common even though I've never been to Ukraine.

I understand that the farmland and the potential of agriculture in Ukraine is exceptional. And as all members in this House know we too are very dependent and very appreciative of the agriculture sector in this province. I would like to, on behalf of official opposition, extend a welcome to Premier Zaremba, and also to the Minister of Agriculture, Minister Pavlovich. We welcome you to Saskatchewan.

We hope that your stay here is enjoyable. We particularly hope you enjoy your time at the farm progress show which is currently underway here in Saskatchewan. And may you enjoy and also . . . enjoy so much your time here that you will come back and enjoy our hospitality again. Welcome to Saskatchewan. Welcome to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Krawetz: — With leave to also introduce guests and make a few comments.

Leave granted.

Mr. Krawetz: —

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

My Ukrainian isn't that good.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Mine is not as good as the member from Canora-Pelly.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 81

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 81 — The Income**

Tax Act, 2000 be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Speaker, while our guests are leaving the gallery I'm going to just . . . I had a couple of comments with regards to the Bill No. 81 that we're about to debate at this particular moment.

Mr. Speaker, the comments that I have echo very much the comments that I've made in an earlier Bill 82. The concerns are just as relevant; the concerns are just as timely; and the concerns are just as urgent as I tried to stress in the Bill No. 82.

A couple of items that I would like to add with regards to this Bill because they are very similar Bills, one certainly working with the other one for probably housekeeping reasons. One of the things that I wanted to include, however, in discussing this particular Bill was the fact that the expanded tax base of PST (provincial sales tax), the downloading onto both the municipal governments, the health districts, and the boards of education, certainly are offsetting factors that do not attract the people and companies into this province, and certainly have not given our people a vision.

That's a point that I wanted to stress again. Because I think that people need the vision and the confidence that our Income Tax Act, while it is being amended, should include those kind of visions, and I'm not sure that I see them here, particularly in the urgency of it.

Another point that I wanted to make before we move this on to committee, Mr. Speaker, was the fact that to be competitive with other provinces and jurisdictions we have to be very much aware of what is going on in their jurisdiction as well.

We are in a competitive mode to try to attract not only our people from leaving, we have to make sure that we are competitive enough that we want to bring these people back, we want to bring businesses back. And one builds on the other. And so success will generate from that particular synergy of both opportunity and development.

Mr. Speaker, the problem that I see with these amendments is that we are focused too much on the short term. Because if we want to remain competitive, we have to be aware that the environment in other provinces, particularly in Alberta — and I have to keep referring to Alberta because I live very close to that situation as you well know — when they proposed to de-link their income tax from the federal income tax, that I think was a very positive aspect.

When we got the report from the Vicq report, where we found that that too was a recommendation to this particular government, I was very pleased to see that that recommendation was picked up in this . . . by this government and is being proposed in the budget to de-link Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this competitive aspect with Alberta is in fact a moving target. When the minister talked about the . . . 70 per cent of our population will be paying the equivalent amount of tax with Alberta, that is no longer the case because the Alberta flat tax rate has now been adjusted. That is an important factor, Mr. Speaker, when the flat tax is being contemplated here in this province.

The fact is that before, when it was aligned by a percentage to the federal tax, we often had an advantage in this province when the federal tax increased.

When the federal tax decreases, as it has in the past and as we're anticipating the decrease to be effective in the federal tax coming up shortly and in the next few years, that definitely becomes a disincentive, a disadvantage, because Saskatchewan, or any province for that matter that has their income . . . personal income tax connected by percentage to that factor will be at a disadvantage.

By going to a flat tax, I believe in this case, the taxpayers in Saskatchewan will in fact be paying more than they would have, or potentially more than they would have, if we had kept the percentage factor in place with the federal tax.

(1515)

I believe, however, that the flat tax route is exactly the way to go. But we have to be cognizant that if we want to give our taxpayers an advantage, we had better be aware that . . . what other provinces are doing and be prepared to reduce that kind of a percentage as well so that our people here in this province will be able to get a tax advantage, which is really the root of the economic development strategy that I think has to be put in place.

With those comments and basically, Mr. Speaker, the comments that I had mentioned in the earlier debate on Bill 82, I would propose that we now move this along to the Committee of the Whole.

But before I do, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I want to make a motion, and it's moved by myself, seconded by my colleague, the member from Redberry Lake:

That this Assembly does now proceed to Bill 233, The Democratic Unionism Act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The division bells rang from 3:17 p.m. until 3:27 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantfoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

Nays — 28

Trew	Hagel	Van Mulligen
Lingenfelter	Melenchuk	Cline
Atkinson	Lautermilch	Thomson
Lorje	Serby	Belanger

Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Higgins
Yates	Harper	Axworthy
Junor	Kasperski	Wartman
Addley		

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is that Bill No. 81, The Income Tax Act, 2000 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

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

Bill No. 83

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 83 — The Income Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This particular Bill, The Income Tax Consequential Amendment Act, 2000, really requires little comment because it relates so closely to the other two Bills that we've already sent to Committee of the Whole.

But I think it's important, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that points that I talked about earlier, the urgency aspect of making income tax changes, the vision needed in the short term for people to build a confidence level in our tax regime so that we can try to be at least competitive, if not given advantage, those are the kinds of items that are very important in these particular income tax Acts.

(1530)

The idea of reducing the personal income tax, I have no problem with. In fact that is the program and platform that the Saskatchewan Party has put forward for some time.

Mr. Speaker, I really have no other comments other than looking forward to going through the Act in more detail in committee. And I would be willing to move this forward now to committee.

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

Bill No. 84

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 84 — The Education and Health Tax Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to add some comments to this particular Act. While the other ones pertain to the income tax portion of the Act and the amendments that were being put forward in the income tax aspect of the tax regime, this one, as you well know, Mr. Speaker, is looking directly at the education and health tax aspect of the proposed budget and platform of this government.

There are several things here that give me some concern and I wanted to highlight several of these things before we suggested that it move forward. I guess I have some problems generally about increasing taxes in this particular province.

I've already talked about the increasing tax being a disadvantage to the economy of this province, to the development of this province, and certainly to the attraction of both businesses and people back to this province, particularly the ones that have moved away on their own accord because of their feeling of lost opportunity here and the advantage that they've been able to find somewhere else.

Mr. Speaker, I have five granddaughters growing up in this province, and I want to see the opportunity develop here in this province for those five granddaughters of mine so that they do in fact have an option to stay here. And I'm pleased that if we put the right conditions in place we can in fact cause the pendulum to swing the other way and in fact make the necessary changes to attract businesses and opportunities here for our young people in particular.

That hasn't been the case with the E&H (education and health tax). I know when the minister put his budget forward there was certainly some direction in decoupling or delinking the income tax from the federal percentage and also with the proposed reduction in income tax over a period of time.

The other side of the pendulum though in this case has been the expanded E&H tax. I guess the name is going to be now called the provincial sales tax. And that too is a bit of a . . . maybe has been a misnomer because of the fact that tax designated by name for education and health hasn't always gone in that direction.

It's much like the fuel tax — probably is a misnomer because only a very small percentage of the fuel tax goes back to the actual construction of roads and those expenses that users of the roads need in terms of fuel consumption.

This particular E&H amendment, or now the PST amendment, has of course expanded the tax base considerably for the residents. The recommendation of this expansion, of course, by the minister went back to the Vicq commission. The Vicq commission, although the initial mandate was for a review of the income tax, was expanded to the provincial sales tax that the minister referred to earlier in another question period that I was able to engage with the minister.

The Vicq commission however made a couple of recommendations that I think is quite important to highlight in this debate. One of them was that the Vicq commission recommended strongly that you could not cherry-pick out of the recommendations. The recommendations should be taken as a whole or not taken at all. That of course was not the case. Certain aspects of that report were chosen to be implemented, others were not.

That is a bit disconcerting because the other aspect of this Vicq report was that the sales tax be reduced to 5 per cent. That reduction in my view, Mr. Speaker, is a positive step in trying to make our province competitive again in an economic sense and in a commercial development sense. Any time we see a

reduction, I would have to commend the instigator of that particular program.

This one however has gone the other way. The PST was not reduced. In fact, the expansion was considerable. The list of items now included in the PST is rather onerous and it's certainly not the incentive that I was hoping to see in terms of a revision of our whole tax environment.

If I could, Mr. Speaker, the thing, the one particular item that probably remains in the craw of most of the taxpayers, is the expansion of the PST in a lot of different areas.

Another item that has really seemed to have struck a nerve of discontent with the taxpayers is the increase of rates for usage, for instance, in parks and for licenses and so on. Items that are not a big issue in themselves, but in fact are an indication that even though the minister is trying to show that there is a revision of the tax environment and for an overall decrease, those small items do not give any comfort to our taxpayers that, in fact, this government is serious in an overall manner in trying to reduce the taxes.

The expansion of the sales tax is rather significant. And if you just look at some of the items that the sales tax refers to, it's really quite comprehensive in terms of a universal expansion. I know there was certain areas that the tax could have been expanded further, but in fact the ones that were chosen are very, very significant. And I don't think there's any merit in saying that we could have done . . . we could have been worse. So by only going part way, we should be recognized as leaders. That is not the case.

Some of the items that we're going to now have to pay an expanded tax on, and therefore offsetting any advantage that we have from a personal income tax point of view, are things like dry cleaning, a service that is really a necessary service. Credit reporting and collection service and even equipment maintenance is something that everybody is going to have to endure one time or another. And now that there's going to be a tax on it, the tax in fact is going to apply not only to an expanded number of services but is in fact going to have to apply to virtually all the people.

Real estate services is an item that we've had a lot of calls on. Security and private investigation. Probably the one that I've heard the most from from my constituents, and probably letters that have been submitted to the minister, would be advertising, accounting, legal, commercial cleaning, and the real estate fees.

I think those particular items are very significant in not allowing our province to be competitive with the other provinces.

Another area that I find that is a real problem is in the areas that apply to the items that most everybody in the province is going to have to use, and not the ones that choose to purchase these things, but items that very much apply.

Now, Mr. Minister, the problems that I'm having with this particular amendment, I'm going to have to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I cannot support this particular amendment.

The division bells rang from 3:42 p.m. until 3:53 p.m.

Motion agreed to on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 29

Romanow	Trew	Hagel
Van Mulligen	Lingenfelter	Melenchuk
Cline	Atkinson	Lautermilch
Thomson	Lorje	Serby
Belanger	Nilson	Crofford
Hillson	Kowalsky	Sonntag
Hamilton	Prebble	Jones
Higgins	Yates	Harper
Axworthy	Junor	Kasperski
Wartman	Addley	

Nays — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Gantefoer	Boyd	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

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

Bill No. 85

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill No. 85 — The Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to enter into the debate on this Bill, the post-secondary graduate tax credit. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is something that I might say leads to public cynicism of our political process.

We had to . . . During the last election, Mr. Speaker, we had the two parties opposite promise the sky to our students. One party promised \$1,000 free tuition a year; another one promised free tuition for the first year. They built up the students' hopes. Parents were asking, you know, when is this going to take effect, and so on.

After the election, we saw the formation of the coalition government. It made it possible for the parties opposite to live up to their election promises. But what did they do? They found that it was an ill-conceived program that . . . ill-conceived election promises and they were getting feedback from the electorate, from their own supporters, saying that you people really didn't think through those promises very well.

So how do we get . . . So they said to themselves, how do we get out of this jam? Well we got to go out and talk to the people. So we had a series of public consultation meetings in January where we saw two ministers of cabinet travel

throughout the province, talk to the people.

They heard everything from free tuition for all years and all students, to saying why don't you just make sure that our post-secondary institutions have enough money so that they can fix the buildings, so they can hire well-qualified instructors, and keep our tuition costs down in that fashion. So we had a whole broad range of suggestions.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, I attended a number of those public consultation meetings, and by far the majority of people felt that if we just look after the institutions and make sure that they're adequately funded, that the buildings can be repaired, and that the government attend to the business of the day and make sure that we have a strong economy, that students have jobs when they graduate; that's all we needed.

But in order to appease some of their supporters who felt that we should have free tuition for all students for all the years that they attend post-secondary education, the government, this coalition government felt that they had to do something. So they came out with this \$350 one-time tax credit, Mr. Speaker.

I talked to quite a number of graduating students and asked them, what do you think of this \$350 tax credit. And they said, really it's not going to make a bit of difference as far as where they seek employment. They said if we can get a decent job in Saskatchewan, certainly we will apply for the \$350 tax credit. But they said it's not going to be a factor in determining where we go upon graduation, Mr. Speaker.

Now this government purports itself to be supporters of students and championing their causes. And I think what maybe what we should do, Mr. Speaker, is just do a little balance sheet on what they've done in the last few months, and just to see how they really do support students.

On the plus side, Mr. Speaker, we have this \$350 one-time tax credit. But now let's look at the other side of the balance sheet, Mr. Speaker. The first thing we hear upon passage of the budget, and we didn't hear . . . it wasn't mentioned in the budget speech — we have to ferret out the information — that there was a loss of the six-month interest-free portion on the Saskatchewan student loan. So this is how they're supporting students.

Then we find, sometime during the winter months, Mr. Speaker, that the much touted Canadian Millennium Scholarship that we're giving to students in Saskatchewan, do the students actually benefit from this? No. Because what happens is the student receives the millennium scholarship in the form of a bursary. But what does the province do? They reduce their bursaries.

So who are the net winners in this situation, Mr. Speaker? It's the provincial government to the tune of \$9 million. For a period of 10 years that's \$90 million — \$90 million more student debt that students will have to pay for.

(1600)

And then what else? There's another item on the balance sheet, on the minus side of the balance sheet. It's cancelling a student

employment program just at a period of time where students need summer jobs. Do we help them find summer jobs? No, we cancel a program, so that if they can't find the jobs on their own they have to incur a larger student loan, more student debt, at the time. So by the time they graduate with the expanded . . . or with the larger student loans because of lost jobs and all those sorts of things, higher student loans because of the confiscation of the millennium scholarship, this \$350 tax credit, they're in a net loss position, Mr. Speaker.

Added to that, Mr. Speaker, are some of the provisions of this past provincial budget where we saw expansion of the PST to things like non-prescription drugs and all the other things that my colleague from Lloydminster mentioned earlier this afternoon, and that adds to their daily living cost, Mr. Speaker.

So really I think, Mr. Speaker, students probably would have been better off if they would have paid attention to the things that needed to be done and not make these ridiculous promises, Mr. Speaker, I think. And not only students but citizens of the province would be in a much better position.

Mr. Speaker, we do have some concerns with this Bill but I think, Mr. Speaker, that most of those concerns can be addressed in Committee of the Whole. So I would at this time move that we move this Bill to Committee of the Whole, 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. 80

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 80 — The Court of Appeal Act, 2000/Loi de 2000 sur la Cour d'appel** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise in the Assembly today to speak to Bill No. 80, The Court of Appeal Act, 2000. There are a number of provisions of the original Act that have remained unchanged since 1915, and so it is right that we would look at some additional changes to those that have already been made to The Court of Appeal Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that this Bill has been brought before the members of the legislature, in part, in order to improve the re-enactment of the Act and enable the translation into French, which our French community in the province has asked for, as well as to accommodate several changes that have been requested by the Chief Justice.

There have been a number of Justice Bills introduced during the legislative session. This one is particularly important as it further clarifies the rules and regulations of the appellant court and provides some update into that Act.

Mr. Speaker, there are a few other provisions in this Bill that I feel that are best addressed in Committee of the Whole.

However, at this time I would like to move, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly does now proceed to Bill No. 231, The

Fire-fighter Protection from Liability Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The division bells rang from 4:06 p.m. until 4:14 p.m.

Motion negatived on the following recorded division.

Yeas — 24

Hermanson	Elhard	Heppner
Julé	Krawetz	Draude
Boyd	Gantefoer	Toth
Peters	Eagles	Wall
Bakken	Bjornerud	D'Autremont
Weekes	Brkich	Harpauer
Wakefield	Wiberg	Hart
Allchurch	Stewart	Kwiatkowski

Nays — 28

Trew	Hagel	Van Mulligen
Lingenfelter	Melenchuk	Cline
Atkinson	Lautermilch	Thomson
Lorje	Serby	Belanger
Nilson	Crofford	Hillson
Kowalsky	Sonntag	Hamilton
Prebble	Jones	Higgins
Yates	Harper	Axworthy
Junor	Kasperski	Wartman
Addley		

The Speaker: — Hon. members, the question before the Assembly is that Bill No. 80, The Court of Appeal 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.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

The Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I'll invite the hon. minister responsible to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today Mike Shaw, from Crown Investments Corporation, vice-president; and Doug Kosloski, as general counsel for the Crown Investments Corporation.

The Chair: — Thank you, minister.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman; and thank you, Mr. Minister, for this opportunity and to your officials for coming out to answer some of our questions.

Bill No. 65, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000, makes some substantial changes and I guess to set the stage for the changes and what those might . . . how far those might go, I

guess the first question would be: how much did CIC essentially lose on the NST deal some time ago?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I assume the member's referring to the SaskTel operation in the Illinois . . . the Chicago area? And that particular project, I think the net loss was in the \$16 million range; I don't have all of the details.

But we also know though that SaskTel has done very well on a number of other operations and that on an overall basis they've done extremely well for all of the people of Saskatchewan. We know the Leicester Cable operation, which had approximately 114 million; their Alouette arrangement, 7 million on the positive side; and the latest Austar deal is the \$34 million-plus side. So on balance they've done very well.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. The purpose of that particular question was not so much to get the particular amount, Mr. Minister, because there's other things we could have asked about such as Channel Lake and Guyana and SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company). But we're not going to go into those in detail at all.

The key thing that we're getting after is I believe this particular provision ends up taking ministers off of Crown boards. And the question is, why exactly are you planning to do that?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well as the member knows, there was a review of the operation of the Crowns and a policy decision made by the government, and ministers are off of virtually all of the Crown boards.

This Bill will actually complete the task and remove the ministers or at least remove the requirement that they be on the board for STC, the Saskatchewan Transportation Corporation; the Saskatchewan Government Growth Fund; and the Saskatchewan land information system. It doesn't mean that the ministers can't be on the board, it's just that it's not required in the legislation.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think now we get to some of the rather scary parts that this Bill is actually working toward. If, as I mentioned earlier on, we have NST and we have Channel Lake and we have Guyana and we have SPUDCO . . . and the list just goes on and on.

And if the ministers are not on the Crown boards, how in the world is the public going to have any confidence that the political body is answerable to them in any way, shape, or form?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well the accountability system is very solid. It will remain that way. All of the major Crown decisions will come to the Crown Investment Corporation's board which is made up of seven ministers, and these resolutions are then forwarded and approved by cabinet. And that's the system that we have.

What we are doing is working with the best of the advice that we can get from within the community around some of our . . . or all of our Crown boards, but we're also maintaining the accountability structures. And I think it's actually this process, this system that we've developed, that the Conference Board of

Canada has said is in the top 25 per cent of accountability systems in this country.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. On the issue of accountability, were you prepared to make a commitment that you will appear at all committee meetings of Crown corporations to answer questions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't plan to be there at all of them. The normal practice is that I would be there for the Crown Investments Corporation but not at the other ones.

Mr. Heppner: — I think we've come to one of the sources of the difficulties. So these committees are going to take place, but you as the minister are not going to be there. What is this going to do for the public confidence in how well those Crowns are run and what their level of responsibility is?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At the Crown Corporations Committee, if there are any questions that you have for the minister, they can be asked at the time the Crown Investments Corporation comes because all of these other companies are subsidiaries of CIC. And so however long that takes then we would be there to respond to those questions. So I don't think there's any diminishment at all in the ability of the members opposite to ask questions.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. It seems a phrase you use — however long it takes — again is all the red flags that are coming up in a real hurry over here. So the immediacy of getting responses have been reduced and it's going to be very difficult to go ahead and try and get those answers because everyone's going to be at least once removed from responsibility.

This amendment also allows the Crowns to expand into . . . or to expand the types of ventures that they can get into. And I would like for you, as a minister, to explain what sorts of things you might be looking at in that possible expansion that's there.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This is not going to expand the range of businesses that the Crown Investments Corporation or a subsidiary can be involved in, but what it will do is recognize the changing business structures that have developed. Not all investments are made within corporate structures — there are limited partnerships, there are joint ventures, there are other things like that. And what this does is recognize that the business climate has changed and that there are other opportunities.

Mr. Heppner: — Other opportunities, as I said earlier on, sounds a whole lot like an expansion, but I guess we won't get into the semantics of that particularly.

Probably one of the more disturbing parts of this particular Bill is that you're giving yourself more power to hide information from the public. This amendment gives a minister wide open, discretionary power not to table certain information when you feel it may be detrimental to the Crown.

We often hear you people talking about open and accountable government. We hear it almost every time that one of your members presents answers to some questions. And we're

wondering for which Crown that wouldn't be . . . it would be detrimental to? And this whole thing kind of flies in the face of accountability, and being open, and being accessible when you have that particular power to hide that.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well as the member opposite knows, the specific reason for the discretion relates to commercially sensitive information, where one is working within an industry or with a partner where some of that information can't be revealed.

But the other side of this is that all of the investments end up becoming orders in council, which are public, and there is a requirement that significant transactions have to be reported to the legislature, you know through the reporting through the Crown Corporations Committee.

What I guess I would say is that the last number of years have seen the accountability levels of the Crowns go up dramatically in increments each year.

And that's one of the reasons that The Conference Board of Canada has made the comments about what we've done in Saskatchewan. We know that we have the annual reports now moving towards . . . reports on a more frequent basis. All of this is to try to make sure that our Crown corporations are accountable to all the people of Saskatchewan, that they're accountable in a way that everybody understands.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. It appears that the need for the Crowns to submit operating budgets to CIC for approval is also being removed. And we want accountability. And I guess the question would be, why has that change been put into place?

(1630)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I guess that's not what's actually happening. Effectively what we are doing is setting up a structure which allows for decisions to be made at a government level, at the CIC level, and at a board level.

And what we know is that a number of the issues that relate to the operating goals and those kinds of things, they're all approved at the CIC level. But they're developed and brought forward at the individual subsidiaries.

But the whole purpose of organizing what we've done is to do it in a way that provides accountability to the public.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. I think those number of questions bring to light some of the major concerns that we had with this particular Bill. And that is the fact that the accountability that should be there, the openness that should be there, the accessibility, the transparency, all those things seem to be a little further removed, and ministers are further removed from awareness of what's happening.

As soon as that takes place — and you already mentioned that there was one step difference that's there now — it means it's that much more difficult for the public and for legislators to get the information that we need when we need it, without saying, well we'll have to pass that on to another committee.

And right at the start I talked about some of the fiascos that have taken place through your organization and Channel Lake, Guyana, and the SPUDCO one — and we're still not quite sure where that one's gone.

SPUDCO was one of those fine examples where really no one seemed to know what was going on. In fact, even at this particular point, we're not sure exactly what happened. Now the potatoes may have had their eyes on the problem, but I don't think the government had their eyes on the problem.

So essentially I guess that is our concern with Bill No. 65, is that you're insulating yourself, you're removing the public from having access to the information that they may want. And with the record that we've seen in the past, it makes this a very frightening kind of a situation, wondering where this is going to end up at.

And I think that's essentially the questions that I wanted to ask and the point that I wanted to make.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would like to thank the member for the questions, and also the concern around the accountability issues.

What I would say is that we know from a number of comments that we received from experts in this field, that the accountability structure of our Crown corporations is unique in Canada in its openness and accountability and it actually is on the leading edge of accountability for the country.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 11 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the officials who are with me today for their assistance in this process. And I would move that we report this Bill without amendment.

THIRD READINGS

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I understand the Lieutenant Governor is here.

The Speaker: — Yes, the Lieutenant Governor is here in the building for Royal Assent, and we'll just take a few moments until Her Honour arrives.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 4:37 p.m. Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills:

- Bill No. 46 - The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 27 - The Certified Management Accountants Act
 Bill No. 26 - The Tabling of Documents Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 4 - The Saskatchewan Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 32 - The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 73 - The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2000
 Bill No. 41 - The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 30 - The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2000/Loi de 2000 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil
 Bill No. 3 - The Health Labour Relations Reorganization Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 48 - The Adult Guardianship and Co-decision-making Act
 Bill No. 38 - The Electronic Information and Documents Act, 2000
 Bill No. 66 - The Personal Property Security Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 43 - The Summary Offences Procedure Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 76 - The Research Council Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 40 - The Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies Act
 Bill No. 39 - The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2000
 Bill No. 7 - The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 35 - The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)
 Bill No. 36 - The Motor Carrier Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 54 - The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)
 Bill No. 78 - The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2000 (No. 2)
 Bill No. 9 - The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 17 - The Child Care Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 45 - The Fuel Tax Act, 2000
 Bill No. 44 - The Insurance Premiums Tax Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 71 - The Health Districts Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 10 - The Department of Health Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 62 - The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2000
 Bill No. 29 - The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 77 - The Saskatchewan Human Rights Code Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 15 - The Department of Justice Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 28 - The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 37 - The Public Libraries Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 69 - The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 68 - The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 67 - The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2000
 Bill No. 13 - The Education Amendment Act, 2000/Loi de 2000 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

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

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 4:42 p.m.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 47 — The Power Corporation Superannuation Amendment Act, 2000

The Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I will invite the hon. minister responsible to introduce his official.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today Mr. Myron Gulka-Tiechko, who is the general counsel for SaskPower Corporation.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your official.

On superannuation, I guess any time superannuation is talked about, those people who are recipients are sort of concerned how this is going to affect them. I guess the very first question is will this change have any immediate or long-term effect on SaskPower retirees and their benefits?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — There's no effect on their pensions. What this does do is put one of the retired persons on the board of the superannuation fund.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And, Mr. Minister, you've just taken me to the other area that I want to ask a question or two on.

The board traditionally, I believe, had five members on it and now has seven. The two questions: first of all, why the expansion; and then how are board members in general chosen or appointed?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The purpose of the additional two people, which I think is the gist of the question, is to make sure we have one space for a representative of the superannuates and the other spot is for a person from within the management of SaskEnergy. Because many of their employees, before it was separated from SaskPower, are still part of this pension plan and they were . . . it was necessary for them to be included in part of this.

But basically that's the structure, to add those.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, so that says where the sources are for the two new ones you're putting in place. What are the sources of the other five? Do they come from any specific areas as well?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The other five members, who are already there, are two employees, two SaskPower management, and an independent Chair.

Mr. Heppner: — What sort of remuneration do members of this particular committee get or receive?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — They just get their travel expenses. There's no honorarium for this.

Mr. Heppner: — That's a good answer; I'm glad to hear it. Hopefully the government can move a little further in that direction and a few other areas. I think it would give the public a lot of confidence in it, especially in something such as superannuation where people are always concerned where their benefits are going and how well they're taken care of.

That basically takes care of any questions that we have on Bill No. 47.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank Mr. Gulka-Tiechko for assisting in this and I would move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 19 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today John Meldrum, who is the general counsel for Saskatchewan Telecommunications.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And again welcome, Mr. Minister, and to your official this afternoon.

Bill No. 19 dealing with SaskTel, I wonder if you could explain basically to me and to all of the people who are watching exactly what this Bill is supposed to do, and what's involved with connector agreements with competitors and what that all signifies.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What this does is delete two things: one, that the interconnection agreements have to be approved by cabinet; and the other point which is that cabinet has to approve all equipment which is connected to the system. Neither one of these makes any sense any more with the modern telecommunications system, and it's also required to go into the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) regulation which is taking effect within a couple of weeks.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. With CRTC becoming more a part of communications in Saskatchewan, will the general public notice any difference with regards to access to the Internet or to telephone service because of what's happening in this Bill?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Not that we know of, no.

Mr. Heppner: — We've had a number of concerns voiced in recent weeks about the quality and the general service provided through Sympatico, and people generally being somewhat disappointed with breakdowns and just not . . . service that isn't

that good. And I'm wondering, is that going to be rectified in any way, or will that kind of thing just continue?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well in this particular year, the plan is to continue to work and expand the amount of money that's involved in the Internet service, which will effectively increase the connectability and also bring more people onto the high speed Internet.

I think the estimate is that there'll be some in and around a hundred million dollars spent this year to further expand SaskTel.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay. You've probably noticed over the last number of weeks there have been a lot of petitions have come through dealing with cellular service in Saskatchewan. What changes are there coming in the future on that? Will there be better service throughout our province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Basically what's happened in Saskatchewan, I guess around the world, is that with people being interested in having wireless access to the Internet, you only can do that on a digital service; you can't do it on an analog service.

So one of SaskTel's tasks as they continue to roll out the coverage across the province, is to make sure that we're building for the next generation, which is the digital system. And so in the meantime there has to . . . there's careful evaluation of all the different investments that are made. Basically the plan would be to provide as wide a coverage as possible.

I think at the present time about 99 per cent of Saskatchewan population is covered with the analog system, but there are clearly some areas where the service isn't that good and we're working at trying to fix that.

The difficulty is that some of those places are places where people travel through but there aren't many people that live there. And we're continuing to work to figure out how to do that. But ultimately the goal would be to have a digital service across where we have all the analog now.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And in spite of the fact, as you mentioned, the percentage of people who have services high, those individuals that aren't in that particular category who are in areas that aren't covered right now, that's probably where it becomes most critical because communications there involve a whole lot of things involving service and safety and all those sorts of things. So even though the numbers may be small, it's probably more critical to those individuals than to other ones.

That basically takes care of the questions that we had on Bill No. 19 and I'd like to thank your official for joining us this afternoon.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd just to say thank you for the questions and also to say that one of the things that may happen in response of around the areas that don't have service now, we may actually go right to digital and bypass analog for some of those areas. And that would be good news for them because they would actually have a better service than some of their

neighbours. But we're looking at it very carefully.

Thank you very much for your questions, and thank you very much to Mr. Meldrum for his assistance.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 6 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I'm pleased to move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 20 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Amendment Act, 2000

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Good afternoon again, Mr. Minister, and to your official.

Bill No. 20, SaskTel Holdco. Well first of all, that's probably a relatively new term to people across the province, so could you just take a few minutes to explain exactly what SaskTel Holdco is about and how does it differ from SaskTel, or is it a part of it, or what's the story with Holdco?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think SaskTel Holdco is the overall operating company. It has, within it, SaskTel and the wireless part, some of the other aspects. And so this is the overall operation.

I think this particular Bill basically deals with setting out a legal footing for creating a tariff as we move into CRTC regulation. And the impact on the public will be very, very minimal because most or all of SaskTel Mobility's customers — and this is where it really relates to a SaskTel Mobility, the cellular phone service — already have written contracts.

This is just sort of to create the fallback contract in case there isn't one, which is a requirement by CRTC.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And I think, so basically for the general public, SaskTel, Sask Holdco, is essentially an interchangeable term, and I think they understand what's happening with the CRTC involvement in communications.

But there is an area of concern that I think we need to address to some extent, get to some detail on, and that is that there seems to have been a definite move over the last while for SaskTel, or SaskTel Holdco, to get involved in situations where they're competing very directly with other smaller, private companies in Saskatchewan. And I'm thinking particularly of the security field. And I think that happened within the last year or two.

So what you're now asking people to do, you're asking the private people to compete with a company that has the public purse at its availability. And I would like for the minister to explain how the fairness of that can be justified to the general public?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, I thank the member for that

question. I think if you look at model of SaskTel Mobility, SaskTel Mobility is basically a dealer network across the province where many small businesses throughout the province work together with SaskTel Mobility and then provide the service component of cellular service in their individual communities.

If they had to be involved with all the technology and the purchase of the technology, they could never get into that business in their local area. But when they hook up in a dealer network they can do that.

A similar plan or arrangement on the security side is that as the security businesses become more and more high tech, if you can use that term, where the costs are quite high, having the model where SaskTel provides a lot of the technology and then allows local people to be secure tech service representatives or run the local businesses, it's good for the smaller business and it's also good for SaskTel.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. So what you've done in effect is you've taken a certain group of dealers and you've given them the advantage of a business that has access to the public purse, and the other ones that don't have that particular access to dealers that are outside of that particular group, those individuals are left out in the cold and stranded and try to compete with SaskTel, which is a pretty difficult if not impossible situation.

(1700)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think what I said before is that this is a situation where you're in an industry where the technology requirements are greater and greater and greater. And that this is a solution that allows for some of the smaller businesses to become dealers for the SaskTel.

And basically that's how this system works. And, you know, it provides a service for the people of Saskatchewan. It also gives SaskTel some opportunity to provide this service to other dealer networks outside of the province.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you for that answer. And I think those individuals who have essentially had their business suffer or possibly even lost their businesses, because of SaskTel moving into that particular area that has been taken care of quite nicely by individuals, are not going to be that happy and are probably afraid of wondering where else SaskTel is going to decide to get into. And as I said, it's not the concern for competition, but the concern is that they have the advantage of the public purse behind them.

Apparently in this Bill, there's a statement made that in a competitive environment, SaskTel Mobility does not have to give out a list of rates. And that's a little difficult to understand when the customer then doesn't have a list of set of rates that they're being charged. How do they take that and compare it with someone and decide whether they're getting a good deal or not?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think basically the answer to your question is that in those areas where there is no competition, then all those rates will have to be set out and published. I think

they'd be available on the Internet or other places.

But in those areas where there is competition, and I'm thinking for example in the Mobility area, then not all of the rates are set out. They're negotiated by contract and people have a choice to go to TELUS or Sprint or wherever else . . . what other companies are available, as well as SaskTel. And if the other company has a better rate, well then SaskTel has to examine kind of how they're setting their tariffs and rates.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. That seems to be turning SaskTel's operation more into much like a used car dealer, where you have to go around and negotiate and wiggle through a situation to decide whether you're actually getting the best price or whether you're not, and I think that's rather unfortunate and it destroys a lot of that confidence I think that SaskTel's had in the past.

That, Mr. Chairman, takes us to the end of the questions that I had on Bill No. 20. I would again like to thank the minister for this opportunity and for his official as well.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 and 3 agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank Mr. Meldrum for his assistance again and thank the member opposite for his insightful questions. I would move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

The Chair: — Before I call clause 1, I'll invite the minister responsible for Liquor and Gaming to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm introducing to you this afternoon on my left, Mr. Peter Glendinning, who's the vice-president responsible for licensing, and to my right, Ms. Lorna Chomyn, who's the legal policy analyst for Liquor and Gaming Authority.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister.

Clause 1

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all I'd like to thank the minister and her officials for being here today.

Madam Minister, what this Bill does is basically level the playing field and, Madam Minister, could you first off give a brief summary of what you are hoping to accomplish here, besides that.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I thank the member opposite for the question, Mr. Chair. The purpose of these amendments is to clarify the legislative rights and obligations that pertain to certain substantial endorsements or reviewable endorsements, and we'll accord formally the same processes to them that currently apply within the area of permits.

We did have a decision that stated that we should be doing that review in the same way we do our permit review, and so we're putting that into the legislation.

This ensures that substantial changes or additions to existing permits are treated in much the same way to allow for public input. These changes ultimately provide a solid foundation for the implementation of the off-sale review's recommendations.

And the commission in the courts have been interpreting the legislation in this way for a while, and so we're putting this in to clarify and formalize the already existing framework.

It also then will establish what is a matter before the commission. And so it clarifies what you would put forward in the area of objections and the commission could review that and determine whether or not that's within the purview of the commission's review of the subject at hand.

I think basically, Mr. Chair, that would be the substantive issues before us in the Bill.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, in a news release from your department dated March 3, it states that the government will also implement new brew pub criteria to ensure that only brew pubs viable in their own right are eligible for off-sale. What is meant by that?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. There were categories or areas where you could receive an off-sale endorsement. One of them that was in place was a brew pub.

And then we had a number of regulations or restrictions that said that if you were going to get an off-sale endorsement, it had to be a certain number of kilometres away from an existing endorsement. Population criteria had to be met. The economics of the area would be looked at.

We found that this process was leading to a large number of objections before the commission when people were vying for an off-sale endorsement, particularly in the area of brew pubs.

We found that there was a very lengthy, very aggressive litigation kind of process. And even though we would have the capability . . . Once we followed a criteria to issue those off-sale endorsements, the process that would unfold would mean that there is sometimes a number of years before you could be granted that, while we hear all of the objections and while we would determine, according to the criteria, who would get that one or two endorsements that become available in a certain area.

And so we've moved to, in these areas, removed those criteria and established for brew pubs an operating criteria. Existing operators say there's a certain commitment that has to happen to that industry to have a product, a good consumer product, and that also would have an economic impact on the community and in that way be on a level playing field with the existing operators.

So we've moved to establish that criteria and they'll be done through regulation, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Madam Minister, there was a study done for this in the urban centres but you seem to indicate that the rural centres seem stable. How do you know this? Was there a study done for the rural centres as well? And if not, why not?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, in the rural areas we know that the sales would be an indicator — the marketplace. For example, we knew in some of the rural areas that there were endorsements available that are not taken up or there were the maximum number available, but no new applications had been taken recently. So we would look at that marketplace and also the distance.

But also the number of objections heard before the commission, it just wasn't there. And we are talking about a market that's relatively flat in sales. Our numbers would show over the last number of years, it's not a major growth area of consumer sales, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister. You mentioned in your comments on this Bill that there will be changes to the powers and processes of the Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission. What do you mean by this? What powers will they have as a result of this Bill, as opposed to what they are right now?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, we did have, as the member mentioned, an extensive consultation process on this issue. And one of the things that came up through that consultation process, but had been considered in the past, is that the commission would not deny anyone a hearing at present.

So when they were hearing a matter before them under review, someone could put forward their complaint based on, maybe they don't like the operator or that it would compete with their marketplace, or there were a number of items that would come before the commission that in law could be considered frivolous and vexatious. Particularly now when we're removing the distance criteria, the economic criteria would be based on marketplace. And so therefore to clarify before the commission why you would want to be an objector and have a hearing on that issue, the commission will now have the power to look at that and determine if that's a valid objection and then be able to tell people that they would be having a hearing scheduled at a certain time.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, in terms of expanding the market, who will be eligible to sell off-sale? Will it be the corner store, certain liquor vendors? Could you clarify that?

(1715)

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. We're not expanding to new categories. I know there was much discussion on expanding the category areas, but we are retaining the hotel, tavern, or brew pub categories that would vie for an off-sale endorsement.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, Madam Minister. That concludes the questions I have regarding this Bill. And I want to thank you again, Madam Minister, and to your officials as

well for being here today. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 18 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 4 inclusive agreed to.

Clause 5

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Chairman of Committees, and Madam Minister, I apologize, and I ask for the indulgence of all committee members because as it relates to this particular piece of legislation, and I understand as regards to brew pubs in the province among other things, I have some questions that I'd just like to ask on behalf of a constituent, if I could?

And I understand that this is the translated version of the Bill, but certainly the questions are still . . . (inaudible) . . . in either English or French. And actually I don't mind . . . If the minister will agree, I should just like to ask the questions that were asked of me this very morning when I received this e-mail from an operator in Swift Current.

Some of the questions here, first of all one of the concerns that this particular operator had was with the timing of the letter that they received from the Liquor and Gaming Authority asking for his views on the proposed changes to the legislation. He has a concern that perhaps the Authority didn't . . . wasn't paying close enough attention to some of the problems we have in terms of the post getting on time to places outside of Regina and Saskatoon.

The day he received his letter asking for his input was the June 20, and that was of course yesterday, and he was asked to provide his input back to the Liquor and Gaming Authority by June 20.

And so that was one question he had. He wondered if it was a factor of him simply not being in Regina or Saskatoon, and it was of a great concern to him. And then there were some specific questions he had. But maybe I'd ask the minister to respond to the issue of the timing of the letter requesting input.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you. And I thank the member for his question, Mr. Chair.

This has been an issue that has been ongoing probably for a number of years, not only a number of months. But we did then announce the Gulka-Tiechko review and invited the particular operator to have input into that. He participated. We then had consultation on the criteria and talked about what that criteria would be. He had also given his concerns and his information at the time of the early review.

And we do apologize on the tight time frame but certainly wanted to be able to go forward from this session to work on regulations. So the Bill was brought before the House and the second reading speech we made, and now into committee, wanted to have the chance for people to comment. And there had been an opportunity before but this time frame was shorter, based on the number of months that people had had earlier to participate in the process.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Minister. Mr. Chairman of Committees, some specific questions on behalf of this business in Swift Current includes the question regarding the minimum production where he indicates in his e-mail that the summary he received from the Authority states the minimum production outside Regina, Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert will be 50 hl (hectolitres) annually.

And his question is, how was that number arrived at? Was that arrived at arbitrarily, and was there consideration? Specifically he's asking: was there not consideration for smaller centres where brew pubs exist where consumption patterns are different and where we need to have sensitivity in provincial legislation regulations to the fact that certain centres are very different in terms of consumption patterns and that affects the ability of a business to be successful, to successfully compete.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Chair, the minimum production levels through this whole discussion have been a matter of debate. The data that we've received from other locations that talk about economic investment in the community that is designed to serve a brew pub customer and the consultation process around that question would suggest that if someone wanted to be a brew pub, operating brew pub in the province of Saskatchewan, the minimum brew would be 50 hectolitres.

There was much concern about people being able to buy a small amount of equipment and to not produce a quality product and want to use that to vie for an off-sale endorsement. And there was a lot of concern with the existing operators in that way, but also we didn't want to bring forward a minimum level that would see overproduction and put a stress on the operator.

And with all of that in mind we've come to the minimum production level, in those areas, of 50 hectolitres. I would remind the member that in urban centres it would be about 200 hectolitres, which is a full brew and more a month. So this will be the minimum requirement based on the consultation and the data from the industry elsewhere in Canada.

Mr. Wall: — A few more questions, Mr. Chair, and Madam Minister. And this particular question I think I could best pose by just summarizing or actually reading from the e-mail where the operator indicates that:

The Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority is proposing to require a minimum 8 hectolitre capacity for fermentation, maturation, etc. Our current capacity (he says) is 6 hectolitres. (He says) We can however produce 65 hectolitres over a 12-month period, 15 hectolitres more than we are required to produce under the guidelines. Why (he's asked) would we increase our fermentation, maturation capacity when we're already over our minimum production quota and, in Swift Current, we won't be able

to sell 65 hectolitres over a 12-month period?

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — I neglected to say, Mr. Chair, that this operator also called Liquor and Gaming Authority, and my office today, and we did have a good conversation with the individual.

It was said to them that when we were talking with the other jurisdictions that have similar regulations in place, and the discussion that occurred with some operators who were very, very concerned about where the minimum requirement would be, we felt this was where we should set the limit. And any existing operator that's under that, we believe will have a two-year-transition period to get to that limit. So they will have some time to get to the requirement. Thank you.

Clause 5 agreed to.

Clauses 6 to 21 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I do, I would thank the officials that accompanied me today, and I would thank the members opposite for their questions. As they know it's been the matter of major review and many months of consultations, and I thank them for their interest and concern on a serious issue for us. With that, I would move the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 47 — The Power Corporation Superannuation Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — 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.

Bill No. 19 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — 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.

Bill No. 20 — The Saskatchewan Telecommunications Holding Corporation Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — 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.

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be

now be read the third time and passed under its title.

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

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

Hon. Ms. Hamilton: — 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.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much. Joining the Associate Minister and myself today are Carol Klassen, the assistant deputy minister, she is to my left; Steven Pillar, the associate deputy minister; Rod Wiley, executive director of finance and management services; and Marlene Smadu, assistant deputy minister.

Subvote (HE01)

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees. Madam Minister, some areas that we haven't touched in our previous discussion on health estimates I'd like to go over.

And where we left off, we talked about facilities last meeting, and you talked about the fact that the new process for evaluation of the relative merits of facility improvements and enhancements is done on a point system.

Minister, I have a document dated July 30 and August 15 that is headed, 1999-2000 Health Capital Review-Project Rating Summary. And there are a whole number of projects and I don't want to go through them in any detail. But I would like to know . . . These were issued shortly before the general election, and I think a lot of people believe that this was a commitment that these projects were going to move forward in a timely way.

Madam Minister, can you update us as to, in general, where the status is and would you make an undertaking that we could receive the detail of these individual projects that are referred to in this document, in writing?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This year our capital budget is \$41.1 million. Of that, 37.541 is committed to projects previously approved and in progress. That includes 8.129 million for our regional care centre projects, 26.125 million towards projects approved prior to 1999-2000, and 3.287 million for projects given approval to plan in 1999-2000.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, there is a detailed listing in this document, and I don't know if you need a copy of it so you reference what we're talking about. But if you have it, Madam Minister . . . and I appreciate your answer in terms of the general projects that have been approved so far this year.

What I'm asking for is a detailed update as to the status of these exact projects, and I see there are groupings A, B, and C group. Could you explain what the A, B, and C groups mean. And I see, for example, under the C group in the Central Plains Health District, the St. Elizabeth's Hospital redevelopment in Humboldt. Those kinds of projects, Madam Minister. If we could have the detailed response as to the status of those specific projects as outlined.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We'll get you that.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. And we do appreciate it.

Madam Minister, we as well talked about funding formulas last time in general, and I indicated to you that in many instances the current ratio for out-of-urban areas, out-of-major centres' policy where there's 100 per cent of facility cost paid in the major — I think just Saskatoon and Regina as a matter of fact — that 100 per cent of facility are paid for in those major centres in recognition of the fact they deal with patients and clients that come from outside of the cities.

Madam Minister, the current situation of 35/65 is also very, very difficult for small rural centres in many instances. And I would like you to comment about the general principle and then my colleague has a couple of questions in specific about that whole issue.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can tell the member is that there are facilities that are constructed in the major centres like Saskatoon and Regina where communities have to raise the local contribution.

An example would be the mental health facility here in the city of Regina. As well, Saskatoon has been given an approval in principle to go forward with a mental health facility for that area, and they will have to raise the local contribution.

The policy is that, should the service be provincial in nature and require capital construction, then the province provides 100 per cent of the funds. If the facility is not provincial in nature, then the province provides 65 per cent of the funds and local people raise the 35 per cent.

There are some cases, and I'll use northern Saskatchewan, where the communities have little capacity to raise money locally and the formula varies there.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Chair, to the minister. The minister is quite well aware of the current facility in Moosomin. And I guess the concern that is raised — an ongoing concern, even as we discussed with Mr. Hack when he was here last week — is that 35 per cent. I believe the formula was 18 and 85 . . . or 15 — pardon me — and 85 versus the 35 and 65.

And I know for a lot of communities in the Moosomin area, some of the smaller towns and villages are really struggling now to try and come up with their percentage of the local funding. It's become very difficult.

And I'm wondering, Madam Minister, we talk about access and equality, and certainly a community like Moosomin does have a lot of cross-border referrals and patients because of the Manitoba residents who find that Moosomin is the closest facility. You get south in that Carievale area Reston happens to service a lot of the population.

So, Madam Minister, the question I have is: has any consideration been given to review that formula of the 35/65 and even move back to the 15/85 to make it somewhat fairer for all residents of the province.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What the member is talking about is the formula that was available for special care homes was 85/15. We obviously have considered this — the contribution given by local communities in the past and certainly within the past two years — but it's a matter of funding and the capacity of the province to have these revenues available.

What I can also tell the member, in the past, hospital construction 70 per cent contributed by the province and 30 per cent by local people. We now have a 65/35 formula and I do know that there are some communities that find this difficult to raise. And I know that we did have a discussion last week.

I think the other thing that I found very interesting about the discussion with Mr. Hack was that he wanted the province to continue with the whole notion of wellness and personal well-being. And that's certainly something that this government supports, is the notion of people taking responsibility for their health, and the whole notion is of supporting personal well-being in the wellness model.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. Madam Minister, I would like to turn now to some other issues.

Madam Minister, just a few days ago the Ken Fyke commission was announced in the province. Madam Minister, I think we asked you in question period and I don't believe we got a definitive answer in terms of the makeup of the commission. Certainly the press release said that Mr. Fyke would be heading a commission, and I think the question we asked you at that time is what other commission members were there envisaged to be. And I think that rather than give me a definitive answer, you went into one of your rhetorical interludes that provided absolutely no information.

So I'd like to ask you in this venue. Is the wording of the press release with the announcement of this commission where it says Mr. Fyke is heading the commission, is indeed . . . is it a one-man commission or is there going to be a process for adding members?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — It is a one-person commission.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Then, Madam Minister, I would ask you — and please for the record, I'm not being critical of Mr. Fyke's

credentials — but it strikes me as something as critical and as important as this whole commission and the review that is necessary in this province, that it might be desirable to have two or three members or at least something more than a committee of one.

Because obviously when you have that kind of a situation, you may end up having some of your very personal situations come to the fore rather than having an opportunity for two or three commission members to exchange perspectives and that sort of thing.

I certainly recognize the problem of a very large commission, but why would you dismiss the idea of perhaps a three-person commission?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We certainly considered the possibility of a number of people serving on the commission. We considered the possibility of a two-person commission, a three-person commission, a five-person commission, and a ten-person commission.

And I think that we concluded that when Emmett Hall did his work for the federal — I think it was the Diefenbaker government — in the 1960s he was a solo commission. And when I looked at the work that was done in Ontario on the Hall-Dennis Commission, that was a two-person commission.

There have been solo commissions in the past and what they have done has brought . . . they have been able to bring expertise to their work and they have been able to consult with people broadly. And I think of the Hall Commission on Grain Handling and Transportation in the 1970s, when I, as an individual, had an opportunity to present to that commission. Chief Justice Hall was the . . . he was the commissioner and he wrote an outstanding report.

(1745)

There will be a very large public consultation process. Mr. Fyke is in the process of putting that together; you know, staff are being hired. The commission is being put together in terms of staffing and location and those kinds of details.

But I can assure the public and I can assure the member that it is Mr. Fyke's intention to consult broadly and widely with the citizenry of this province as well as health stakeholders and health providers. And to look at some other ways of consulting using the Internet, using teleconferencing, SCN (Saskatchewan Communications Network), those kinds of things so that communities and individuals will have an opportunity to participate.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, minister. In the press conference as well, or at least in the questions and comments surrounding the press conference, there was a brief discussion about the overall budget for this commission, and I believe that it was something in the . . . slightly in excess of \$2 million was discussed.

Minister, I suspect at this stage you don't have a detailed breakdown as to what that budget might be, but I would ask for your undertaking when that budget is finalized if we could have

a copy of that, please, in writing, including who the personnel are that are being hired and what their remuneration levels are. Could we have that undertaking, Madam Minister?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I will endeavour to get you the budget, and I will endeavour to comply with your request.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, I'd like to move to another area of the whole Health department issue and budget, and that is the whole issue of ambulatory care and the delivery of people from one location to other in the ambulance system — air ambulance and land ambulance, road ambulance. Madam Minister, in some meetings that we've had with the people from the ambulance association, there have been some concerns expressed by that association.

And certainly it struck me is that there are many detailed things that are problematic, but there seem to be a very great concern about an overall lack of coordination. And the kinds of examples where an ambulance team may be delivering a person from Yorkton, for example, into Regina, and basically the crew are sitting here waiting to see what's going on.

The care that's being prescribed or delivered in Regina might be delayed and people delay, and quite often then there's an overnight stay required and the ambulance team are sitting here or drive back. And there seems to be very poor and very spotty coordination, Madam Minister, in the system. And of course as you know, there's different ambulance agencies and all of these issues figure into it.

What steps are you taking to address this issue?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We have undertaken a look at how do we put together a provincial emergency medical services strategy or framework for the province. The member, I think, is absolutely correct in terms of a lack of overall coordination in the province.

At present we have 32 health districts that may enter into contracts with private ambulance companies or non-profit organizations, or they may have people on staff. And I think we've had this discussion before.

And what we are doing with our emergency medical services project is that we have contracted with two people to make recommendations and design a provincial emergency medical service system that is client centred, it's coordinated, and it ensures effective use of available resources.

And I could tell you what questions the two people who've been tasked with this challenge have been asked to address. And the first question is, how should emergency medical service dispatch and response processes be organized to ensure among EMS (emergency medical services) providers, that's air and ground, and designated emergency sites, hospitals, and health centres.

Second thing that they've been asked to address is how should the EMS system be structured — the examples would be base locations, cost-effective models for service delivery, for varying call volumes because call volumes do vary across the province

— to ensure consistent and timely response by professional personnel to citizens across our province.

And what are the associated costs and then the priorities for implementation? How do we begin to implement this?

And the third question is based on a recommended design and cost of the provincial EMS system. How will the system be cost shared between the province and users of the system? And what is a proposed rate structure for the system's use? So what portion comes from the province, what portion may come from the citizen.

There are two people who have been tasked with this work. Mr. Keller, who is a partner of Fitch and Associates which is a recognized expert in medical transportation, operations, finance, system design. And the second person that has been involved in this task is Dr. James Cross who is a medical doctor in the province of Saskatchewan. He is a medical director to Saskatchewan Air Ambulance, and he's presently chief of emergency medicine in the P.A. (Prince Albert) Health District. So these two gentlemen have been tasked with this job and they're to report to me by the end of September of 2000.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. Will that report be a public document or is it a ministerial document?

Ms. Atkinson: — It's a report that will be given to me but I can assure you that we'll make a summary of the report available to you. And we're also going to work with the stakeholders in emergency services in the province to ensure that there is significant involvement in designing a provincial system.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. And I think under your first question it talked about the dispatch, and I assume that that's going to be done in coordination with the proposed expanded 911 system and would coordinate with those issues. And I see you nod in agreement and I'll accept that.

Madam Minister, I'd like to now move to another area briefly. The Canadian Blood Services — of course as you are aware, this is an initiative by the provincial governments and right across Canada. And I see a fairly significant increase in the commitment of expenditure to the Canadian Blood Services.

Is that an expenditure that is looked at as increasing? Are we moving to the optimum level or can you explain why there's a pretty significant increase? And is that now up to the current formula, or why that significant increase, and is it likely to continue at that rate?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — As you know, ministers of Health across the country have made a commitment to ensure a safe blood system in Canada, and there's no question that we are looking at an increase of approximately \$8 million for the operation of the Canadian blood system. And that's an increase of 48 per cent over last year.

However, about 4.5 per cent of the increase reflects a revision to the budget, the Canadian Blood Services budget baseline, to adjust for an underestimate of the CBS (Canadian Blood

Services) costs in 1999-2000 and reconciliation to actual utilization in that fiscal year. And the remaining 3.5 provides for safety and blood quality initiatives, increases in use and costs of blood fractionation products, staffing salary, benefit increases, systems, equipments, vehicles, facilities, and other costs.

I think it's fair to say that ministers of Health who recently had a teleconference are concerned about the costs of the Canadian Blood Services. But we do not want to compromise blood safety and blood quality because we don't want to go back to the old system where the blood system was compromised. And we are now seeing the consequences of that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I would like to now turn to some personnel — in the general sense — issues, Madam Minister, maybe beginning with medical doctors. I noticed recently there has been a great deal of concern expressed by the whole issue of pediatrics and the number of . . . There were some doctors leaving, but more of a concern is the fact that some of our residents were indicating that they were not staying.

In fact I see in a newspaper article that there was a special allocation to the Royal University Hospital of \$500,000 to provide for some general practitioners to alleviate the strain by the fact that we were going to lose some of our pediatricians. Madam Minister, where is this project at and where does the \$500,000 come from? Did it come out of the general operation of the department or did it come from the transition fund?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — For the member's information, I've had an opportunity to meet with the pediatric residents at Royal University Hospital, and there is no question that there has been significant pressures placed on those pediatric residents in the last several months.

What I can say to the member is that presently in the province of Saskatchewan, a large majority of Saskatchewan pediatricians are compensated through a fee-for-service system. And we've had an opportunity to look at what the average fee-for-service pediatrician in the province, excluding those working in the College of Medicine, would earn.

And it appears from the information that we've gleaned from our records, is that it's some place over \$200,000 per year. Now that is not net income, because they would have expenses in their offices and so on.

College of Medicine pediatricians earn less fee-for-service income, but they do earn income from other sources, that would reflect academic and research activities.

So what I can say to the member is that we have four residents that are graduating. They're finished their residency as I understand it. There is one resident that is on maternity leave. And that leaves us with seven residents that have left because they feel as though they have been overworked in their residency because there has not been the kind of coverage that they believe available . . . should be available by pediatricians.

What we did receive from the College of Medicine and the Saskatoon Health District was a proposal to assist in remedying

the situation. We have . . . and the proposal included the idea of having general practitioners with enhanced critical care skills being hired, I believe as house doctors, to assist.

We have put forth the notion of \$500,000 that would come out of the budget of the Department of Health. I also understand that there will be eight new residents joining the college, I believe July 1 they begin a residency program. So there will be eight additional residents that will be in residency at the Royal University Hospital through the College of Medicine.

So we're trying to address the situation.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Staying on the topic of general practitioners in particular, I note that there has been a study or information that we received — and I'm sure the department has — from the Saskatchewan Medical Association that lists the number of communities where there are single-practice clinics, if you like, and then on to multiple numbers of practitioners in a number of communities.

Madam Minister, I'm assuming that you have that type of information, and certainly in discussions that we have had with medical residents and students, one of the concerns that they had about their practising in rural Saskatchewan, or in Saskatchewan in general, was the lifestyle issues surrounding single- or even dual-practice centres.

(1800)

Have you done a study as to what's going on in these centres and a bit of the demographics? I understand that the people that are there, some of them ended up in these single-practice communities because of a policy that was jointly done by the Department of Health and the college of physicians and surgeons in terms of offshore doctors coming and spending some time in rural Saskatchewan as a prerequisite. And I understand that policy's been dropped.

So what I'm asking in light of that, what steps are being taken to address the issue of the fact that it's going to be difficult to maintain single-practice clinics in communities in this province?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I want to thank the member for the question because this is an important question. And it is a question that is important to people living in rural Saskatchewan, particularly in communities that are smaller.

I think I shared with the House, about a year ago I had an opportunity to go on a retreat at Dr. Dale Dewar's farm, who is a rural practitioner in Wynyard. And I was on the retreat with family medicine residents and we had a very good discussion about what would it mean for you to practise outside of the larger centres in this province — what would you need?

And at the time, it became very clear to me that younger physicians that were on the verge of graduating did not want to practise in a solo practice or a two-person practice, or in most cases not even a three-person practice. They wanted to have at least four or five general practitioners practising together so that they could have a holiday with their families and have coverage.

Now what we have tried to do to deal with the idea of solo practitioners is to have rural practice enhancement grants for those practitioners who would like to establish a practice with another practitioner. We have also got on-call coverage for those solo doctors that may be in three different communities where they can cover off for each other, and funding is available for that.

We also have money for locum services. So if you're a solo practitioner or a two-person practice and you're both away at the same time, that locums can come out and provide coverage while you're away. There are a number of things that we've tried to do.

The member raises this issue of the change that was made by the college of physicians and surgeons. Fundamentally the change was to also recognize regional centres where they too were having difficulty in some cases attracting practitioners to their areas. And we have always had this policy, I understand, that if you were a practice in a city and you were losing a physician and it meant the numbers were dropping, then you would be able to recruit someone to your practice from outside of Canada.

But I do think that the member raises an important point. This is why I'm pleased that the Associate Minister of Health is elected and is the Associate Minister of Health because she comes from a nursing background, and nurses are wanting us to move more and more to the primary health care model. With advanced clinical nursing skills, nurses could provide some of those point of entry into the health system and provide health services to people living in more remote and northern parts of Saskatchewan.

That's why we've got a number of projects that are on the go. We're looking at the possibility of advanced clinical nurses not only say in a practice with a physician who wants them, but perhaps entering into a partnership with a physician who may not be located there in the community, but through Telehealth and Telemedicine could be able to provide support to that advanced clinical nurse in terms of diagnostics and so on.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, is there a requirement of doctors who are outside of the country and want to practise in Saskatchewan, is there a requirement for them to sign a contract, a one- or two- or three-year contract to practise in Saskatchewan, in rural Saskatchewan, in order for them to be licensed?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Usually they come to Canada without full licensure. And they need to make a commitment of three years to practise in rural Saskatchewan while they get their licensure.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Madam Minister, if their licensure is complete and their credentials are in order, is that waived?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — No. They have to fulfill the commitment, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gantefoer: — So then it's irrespective of the licensure. That really isn't the issue. The issue is they've got to simply make that commitment, a three-year commitment, to rural

Saskatchewan. But it's not the issue. Irregardless, they have to spend the three years, irregardless of the licensure. Okay, thank you.

Madam Minister, in terms of, you talked about the point of entry, and I'd like to talk a bit about the interdisciplinary type of approach to health care. And if I look at the *Estimates* book, when you look at medical services and medical education programs category, there's a number of subprograms underneath that. And really it sort of jumps out at you in terms of this whole interdisciplinary practice.

And I know that there are fee-for-service and not-fee-for-service categories of medical doctors under the negotiated contract or agreement that you have with the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

Madam Minister, could I get a bit of a breakdown as to what is going on in terms of the fee-for-service and how many practitioners are operating in that mode? And how many practitioners would be moving into the not-for-fee-for-service — the doctor, the salary type of mode?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — About 20 per cent of physicians in the province work in an alternative payment kind of schedule. That may mean that they are physicians that work in a hospital. They may be working through a primary health care site, they may be radiologists, certain specialists that are on alternative payment, they may be physicians in the College of Medicine. But 80 per cent of our specialists and general practitioners are fee-for-service physicians.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, you talked a bit about the whole concept of point of entry and that issue, and suggested that there may be an expanded role for registered nurses, particularly those that have the appropriate training so that their scope of practice embodies more of the assessment and diagnostic skills that may be appropriate.

Madam Minister, are there any projects . . . and I've heard the concept at least discussed where there may be an arrangement in a community with an entity. And I don't want to get hung up on what the entity is, but the entity may include nurses, advanced clinical nurses, chiropractors, dentists, optometrists, medical practitioners, doctors, and sort of a team-interdisciplinary approach, that the point of entry becomes perhaps that appropriately trained nurse and then referrals go into the system and we would minimize potentially, or at least work collaboratively with, other disciplines. And it might also mean that the fact that a medical doctor is only part of a team, and so that isolation factor gets diminished.

Has there been any consideration of this type of a concept and indeed has it gone any further? Could you update us on where that type of concept is?

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you. Thanks for the question, too, because I'm quite anxious to talk about primary health care services. We do have, I think, it's 13 sites in the province now and continually are working with communities to develop that option if that's what they would need.

We have sites in Hudson Bay, Beechy, Wilkie, Kyle, North

Battleford has one — so they're not only urban centres, they're also in . . . or rural centres, they're also in urban centres. We have one being developed in Saskatoon, two actually in Saskatoon. One in Regina, La Ronge, Hafford.

So there's several sites up and running that do have exactly the complement of multi-disciplinary people that you were mentioning, including chiropractors. We have the options for visiting, itinerant services. So there's some of them have set up a dental chair, those sorts of things.

So it's not a cookie-cutter model. There are different needs in different communities. So the primary health care services are being developed, or the options are being developed, with a lot of community involvement, physician involvement, the multi-disciplinary team involvement so that the community gets what it actually needs in the centre that's developed for that community.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Madam Minister, and I'm encouraged to hear that there are actually projects underway.

And in the interest of time, would there be a report or an update in terms of a written report that summarizes and details some of these projects and what disciplines are involved and sort of the methodology that might be available, Minister, to share with us?

Hon. Ms. Junor: — We've done some — actually last year I believe it was — technical briefings with the media. And we certainly have that available for you and it could be in an updated version.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. And as well, is there work of this nature — I'm a great believer that there's no point in reinventing the wheel, that good work and good ideas coming from other jurisdictions and other areas are certainly worthwhile — is there some general work that you're using for models and some direction or guidelines in terms of saying, here were some good ideas that we've seen operate in this country or offshore? And would that information be available as well?

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you very much for that question too, because we've modelled our primary health services basically on the Quebec model which is the CLSCs (Centre local de services communautaires). And I have visited actually one, and they do have demonstrated success with their model.

So we have adapted ours to theirs and definitely have shared our experiences with other jurisdictions also, including at a conference in '99 called Pulse '99 where I actually spoke on primary health services and detailed some of the initiatives that we've taken in those communities that I just mentioned.

I've also just come back from Argentina where I spoke to the Minister of Health nationally in Argentina, as well as the Minister of Health from Brazil and the provincial ministers — or however they call their territories there — the ministers of Health from the whole of Argentina. We talked about primary health care and I actually visited their sites. And we shared our experiences.

So we are looking across Canada and internationally to share experiences. The international conference on primary health care or community health services that I attended, that's where I did visit a community health centre in Quebec and that's probably the closest model to what we are actually using here.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Madam Minister. I do appreciate it. Minister, turning to another area, and I understand that this is appropriate, Mr. Chair, is to talk about the Transition Fund. It's under the general category of Health but it's in a separate section of the *Estimates* book.

Madam Minister, there's \$150 million allocated in the transition fund. Could I have an update on what monies out of this fund have been already allocated?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — There's been \$3 million allocated to the cancer agency for linac at the two centres. Regina has received \$8.36 million for operating costs; capital costs of 2.5 million. Saskatoon has received 9.64 million for operating and 2.5 million for capital. This total is \$26 million — has been expended from the \$150 million Health Transition Fund, and no decisions have been made on the remainder of the fund.

(1815)

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Madam Minister, there has been some discussion at least that this fund, the primary purpose of this fund is to bridge from the current budgeting reality to a future reality that would be sustainable.

Madam Minister, how long is this fund intended to . . . or what's the life expectancy of the fund? I'm certainly expecting it's not all in this single budget year. Do you have projections as to how much time it will take to have this allocated? And what are the criteria for allocating it?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — This is one-time funding. Obviously it doesn't all have to be spent in this year. Some of it could be set aside while we wait for the recommendations of the Fyke commission.

The money could be available to help health districts deal with changes. It could be one-time money to assist districts in becoming financially sustainable. It could be one-time money to be used for capital or equipment investments that could result in long-term operational savings. It could be used for replacing certain services in buildings. It could be used for a number of things, but we have not yet determined how the remainder of the fund will be dealt with.

Mr. Gantefer: — Well, Madam Minister, it seems to me if you have no idea how you're going to spend the money, how did you decide how much the fund should be?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — We do have ideas on how we'd like to spend it, just so you know, but I mean we have to go through a process. We have the Fyke commission, we want to talk to health districts, and there are a number of people that we'd like to have a discussion with. And we want to wait for the Fyke report.

How did we arrive at this sum. There was equalization money

that came from the federal government. It came during our budgeting process. We had some money that was put aside for the centurian funds that are available as we make our way to Saskatchewan's 100 birthday, and some of the money was available through equalization for a Health Transition Fund. And we knew that we were going to launch a review of the health system and we thought that this could assist us.

We also know that this is one-time money. We don't expect to build this money into our base budget.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. But as minister undoubtedly knows, we're a quarter way through this budget year for all intents and purposes. The Fyke commission was just launched, and I understand that the very first expectation of a written report or detail is going to be this fall.

How in the world out of all of these issues where you've only allocated \$26 million dollars, and there's \$124 million not allocated, are you going to be able to do this in a thoughtful, planned way when the Fyke commission, for example, is only going to start giving recommendations in the fall when virtually 75 per cent of the budget year is completed.

Is there going to be a big hurry up spending spree in the last three months of the budget year, because it doesn't sound as if you've got a clear plan for this money if you're not intending potentially to carry some of these one-time monies over so that it can be spent in a very thoughtful, planned way.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — What I can say to the member is that the Fyke commission will report in the fall and then early winter. And I also indicated that all of this money does not need to be expended in this fiscal year. It is one-time money, and I fully expect that we will be thoughtful in how we expend the remaining \$124 million in the Health Transition Fund.

And we know that there are lots of ideas about how we could spend the money. One of the ideas is to continue to support our health information systems. This is a continuing issue as health people across the country try and administer health systems.

In order to be cost effective and efficient, health information is important. It could be used for health information systems. It could be used for health districts to assist with their debt and it could be used for equipment replacement because we know that some of our infrastructure is aging. And it could be used as we make transformations from one service to another.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I certainly look forward to further detail as the year unfolds in terms of how this is going to be spent. And I trust that we will be updated on that information.

Madam Minister, for today's session, those are all the questions I have. I would like to thank both of the ministers and their officials for answering our questions today.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I'd like to thank the officials for being present and I'd also like to thank the member for his very thoughtful questions.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 6:23 p.m.