

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition on behalf of residents of northeast Saskatchewan concerned about the condition of Highway No. 23 west from Junction 9 to the town of Weekes. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 23 in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

This petition is signed by citizens of Weekes and Hudson Bay.

I so present.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from people who are concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately reinstate a reasonable annual deductible amount for prescription drugs in Saskatchewan.

The people who have signed this petition are from Kuroki, Wadena, and Hendon.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this afternoon on behalf of citizens concerned about the shortcomings in the tobacco legislation. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately amend tobacco legislation that would make it illegal for anyone under the age of 18 to be in possession of any tobacco products; and furthermore, anyone found guilty of such an offence would be subject to a fine of not more than \$100.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Saskatoon and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present, to do with overfishing at Lake of the Prairies. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives, and with other provincial governments to bring about a resolution in the Lake of the Prairies situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a

responsible manner by all people in the future.

The signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Langenburg, Marchwell, and Churchbridge.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable condition of Highway 42. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life and to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Riverhurst and Moose Jaw.

I so present.

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are concerned about crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to halt its plan to take money out of the crop insurance program and hike farmers' crop insurance premium rates while reducing coverage in order to pay off the provincial government's debt to the federal government.

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

And the prayer is signed by residents of Weyburn, and Beaubier, and Benson.

I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition here to improve Highway 42:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to make the necessary repairs to Highway 42 in the Arm River constituency in order to prevent injury or loss of life, to prevent the loss of economic opportunity in the area.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Eyebrow and Central Butte.

I so present.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have petitions from citizens concerned about unreasonably priced telephone service in the Emerald Lake area:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to modify the exorbitant rates of telephone hookup to these cabins, and provide reliable cellular telephone coverage.

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

Signed by the citizens of Warman, Saskatoon, Martensville, Shellbrook, and Biggar.

I so present.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today with citizens concerned about Highway No. 15. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to use a portion of its highway budget to address the concerns of the serious condition of Highway 15 for Saskatchewan residents.

And the petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by people from Simpson, Watrous, Imperial, Young, and — that's it.

I so present.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan concerned with the Besnard Lake situation. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to work with the federal government, First Nations representatives to bring about a resolution in the Besnard Lake situation and to ensure that our natural resources as a whole are used in a responsible manner by all people in the future.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, on this petition are from Leask, from Shell Lake, Shellbrook, Blaine Lake, Waldheim, and Parkside.

I so present.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again I rise with a petition from citizens concerned about the lack of cellular telephone coverage in rural Saskatchewan. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide reliable cellular telephone service to all communities throughout the Wood River constituency.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Bracken, Frontier, Orkney, and Climax.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 7, 11, 18, 23, 24, 59, 132, 134, 146, and 147.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

To the Minister of Ag and Food: can the minister provide the listings of hay or straw bales available in the province of Saskatchewan; and furthermore, could the minister also explain where the feed is and the availability and the cost.

And the second question is also to the Minister of Sask Ag and Food: is the wildlife portion of the Saskatchewan crop insurance policy still in place; if not, why; and what changes have been made regarding the policy?

Thank you.

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

To the Minister of CIC: at what rate does SaskPower pay contractors for rural residential installations?

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

To the minister in charge of the Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management: in view of the present crisis will the government open wildlife habitat lands to temporary grazing by local ranchers?

I further give notice that I shall no day no. 58 ask the following question:

To the Minister of Health: in view of the province being sued by tobacco companies for recent legislation, will the government follow the lead of British Columbia, Minnesota, and Florida, and countersue the tobacco companies for the cost of health care resulting from tobacco use?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — Members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure to bring to your attention that amongst our many guests here today we have 20 Saskatchewan Olympians from the 2002 Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, the 2002 Paralympics in Salt Lake City, and the 2001 Special Olympics in Anchorage, Alaska, and they're all seated in the gallery.

By leave of the Assembly I will be calling upon the Premier, then on the Leader of the Opposition for remarks, and then I will be recognizing MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) as they introduce their constituents in given order.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we're going to have another little opportunity, with the recess of the House, to all be out in the rotunda where I believe myself and the Leader of the Opposition will want to make some special remarks.

Just let me begin the process of introduction, and I would like to

close the process of introduction as well if that's possible, by giving a general welcome to all of our very, very special guests who are here today. And it's good that we have a number of school groups with us this afternoon too, to meet these very special guests who we are now describing as our Saskatchewan Olympians.

Mr. Speaker, if I understand the process, the guests will be introduced individually by the MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) who represents them in this legislature and then I would ask leave of MLAs to stand and introduce four or five who cannot be here this afternoon.

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and on behalf of the official opposition we would also like to join with the Premier and welcome the Olympic and Paralympic athletes to the Assembly. As all members know, we are extremely proud of our Saskatchewan born and raised residents who have performed so well both provincially, nationally, and internationally.

I think it is particularly fitting that we as a province recognize the contribution that they make to our lives and to the pride that we all share in our province vicariously through their activities.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking forward to the celebration of their success in the rotunda later this afternoon, and particularly we want to welcome you on behalf of the official opposition to our Assembly this afternoon.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Ms. Hayley Wickenheiser, member of the Gold Medal women's hockey team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Ms. Colleen Sostorics from the great community of Kennedy, a member of the Gold Medal women's hockey team. Congratulations.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to you and to the Assembly Dana Antal, member of the Gold Medal women's hockey team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Wally Kozak, assistant coach of the Gold Medal women's hockey team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Ms. Catriona Le May Doan, Gold Medal in women's speed skating for the 500-metre track.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mark Knoll, competitor in men's long track speed skating.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce Mr. Don Walchuk, member of the Silver Medal men's curling team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce Mr. Ken Tralnlberg, member of the Silver Medal men's curling team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Lorjé:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my great privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Gene Friesen, coach of the women's curling team.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Colette Bourgonje, competitor in women's cross-country skiing.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Jeff Whiting, team manager for the Nordic team at the 2002 Paralympics in Salt Lake City.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege this afternoon to introduce to you Mr. Adam Hyggen, cross-country skiing specialist at the Special Olympics in Anchorage, Alaska. He won a Gold Medal in the 500 metres and a Silver Medal in the 1-kilometre relay.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to make a second introduction, Mr. Speaker. And I'd like to introduce to the Assembly Ms. Kelly McRuvie who is a speed skating athlete who competed at the Special Olympics in Anchorage, Alaska. Mr. Speaker, she was awarded the Gold Medal in the 1,000-metre race, the Gold Medal in the 777-metre race, and the Silver Medal in the 500-metre race.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(13:45)

**Ms. Jones:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed a great pleasure for me to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Al Bodnarchuk, member of the health care team at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Ms. Wendy Epp, member of the health care team at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Elhard:** —Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's my privilege to introduce to you and to the Assembly today Ms. Mavis Wahl, member of the health care team at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Kelly Dearborn, member of the mission staff for Team Canada at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Benoit Morin, member of the mission staff for Team Canada at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce another athlete, to introduce to the Assembly Mr. Reid Morrison, member of the mission staff for the Team Canada at 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wakefield:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege indeed to introduce to the Assembly Ms. Shelley Coolidge, member of the staging team at the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympics.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I have five who I would like to introduce in their absence. And we'll ask members, I think, at the close of the five, to show our appreciation in a loud enough fashion that they might hear us wherever they are today.

Mr. Speaker, not able to be with us:

Mr. Kaspar Wirz, who was head coach of the Nordic team at the 2002 Paralympics.

Ms. Deidra Dionne, a Bronze Medal in aerial freestyle skiing at the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

Mr. Theoren Fleury, member of the Gold Medal men's hockey team, 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics.

Ms. Kelly Béchard, member of the Gold Medal women's hockey team, 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics. And if I may say, Mr. Speaker, Kelly was inducted into the Indian Head, the

Rural Sports Hall of Fame, on Friday night and told us on Friday evening that she was doing some mid-term exams today and so we agreed that was likely the place she should be.

And finally, Mr. Murray Linthicum, who won a Gold Medal in team roping which was a cultural demonstration sport in Salt Lake City.

In their absence, let us congratulate and greet these five.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the rest of this Assembly 28 students from Winston Knoll Collegiate in the constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley. They are in the west gallery. They are accompanied by teacher Tana Mitchell.

And there's a message from my colleague from Regina Elphinstone to the teacher, Tana, and that is that how things change; now the students have become the teachers. I gather they were classmates together.

I would invite all members to welcome these students. I had a wonderful visit with them. Please join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly seven grade 5 and 6 students seated in the east gallery from the Neville School.

The students are accompanied by their teachers Mrs. Olmsted and Mrs. Fraser; chaperones Mrs. Unger, Mrs. Robertson, Mrs. McLearn, Mr. Tschetter, and Mrs. Fowke. I hope that they have had a good day in the Assembly so far and that they will enjoy the rest of their day.

I had the opportunity to meet with them earlier and enjoyed that very much. Welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues here in the Assembly a distinguished guest that's with us here today, Father Methodius Kushko, who's in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Father Kushko has been a priest for 32 years and served the great community of Ituna in my constituency since 1996. Father Kushko has served all over Saskatchewan and into Manitoba and as far away as New Jersey. He has been honoured for many achievements throughout his life.

I have always welcomed and appreciated Father Kushko's advice to me and really who among us couldn't use a little divine intervention, Mr. Speaker. I was also from time to time told that the Liberals didn't have a prayer, but I certainly had a good source in Father Kushko — who by the way, Mr. Speaker, is celebrating a birthday on June 16. Please help me welcome

Father Kushko to our Assembly.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you . . . or to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, it's a pleasure to welcome some constituents of mine from the town of Duck Lake.

Seated in the east gallery is 10 students from the Dumont Technical Institute of Duck Lake Campus. They ventured all the way down here today to view the proceedings in the Legislative Assembly. And I hope when they go back they take some of the rain that has fallen on Regina and take it back home to our constituency.

So I would ask all members of the Assembly to please help me welcome the students from Duck Lake, Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kasperski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the Assembly, 27 grade 5 students from St. Joan of Arc School in the heart of Regina Sherwood, Mr. Speaker.

They're in the west gallery and I'm looking very much forward to joining them shortly after a tour of the building. And I'd like to ask all my colleagues to welcome them here on this special day.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you I'd like to introduce to this Assembly my cousin and his wife, proud parents of Colleen Sostorics — Laney and Jean.

Mr. Speaker, Laney through the years has been very involved in the minor hockey program through coaching and managing. And if it wasn't for volunteers like my cousin and his wife, young people like Colleen Sostorics probably wouldn't have had the great privilege of representing our country and being a gold medallist this year.

So welcome, Laney and Jean.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, the person who has come here the farthest of all of our guests today, and that's Sol Urcullu from Argentina. And if you would please stand — she's in the west gallery.

She is accompanied today by one of my constituents, Mr. Gary Carlson, who is a 25-year member of the Eastview Rotary Club. And Sol is one of the Rotarian exchange students who's in Saskatchewan for a year.

And we ask all members to welcome her and Gary here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, Len and Arlene Antal. Len and Arlene own and operate Len's IGA in Esterhazy. And they are, by the way, the proud parents of Dana with her gold medal from the championship women's hockey team. Would everyone welcome them here today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery is a friend of mine, Mr. John Patterson of Qu'Appelle. John is a proud member of the Métis community. He was a candidate for us in 1999 and he had the member for Regina Northeast running scared. In fact I think he's still quaking in his seat. So I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming Mr. Patterson today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Goulet:** — Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge as well the students from Gabriel Dumont Institute. As a former executive director of Gabriel Dumont Institute it always gives me great pride to welcome the people from all over Saskatchewan, the First Nations and Métis people who are going through our institutions. Of course in Cree as well to say, Ta wow. To say . . .

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

And also to Ken Tralnberg . . .

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

. . . as well. Both and everybody has done well in the educational process and also our athlete, you know, from northern Saskatchewan.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

### Saskatoon Named One of Canada's Healthiest Cities

**Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, according to a recent survey released Wednesday, Saskatoon is one of the healthiest places to live in Canada. In its report, the Canadian Institute for Health Information indicates that Saskatoon matches or exceeds national levels in most of the health-related categories it examined.

Not only are Saskatoon's cancer, circulatory, and respiratory death rates lower than the national average, but Saskatoon's life expectancy is 79 years — one year more than the national average. And the study looked at 63 health regions across the country.

Saskatoon's CEO (chief executive officer), Jim Fergusson, is extremely pleased with the report's findings, and he says and I quote:

Saskatoon can be proud of our excellent record of the past few years . . . it is due to the hard work, professionalism

and true dedication of all those involved in the delivery of health care that we continue to receive such favourable national recognition.

Fergusson attributes Saskatoon's high life expectancy rate to our province's environment and lifestyle as well as the availability of very high-quality health services. Mr. Speaker, this is a good example of how our province's commitment to quality health care in Saskatchewan translates into positive health results for the people of our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Muriel Sheldon's Induction into the Saskatchewan 4-H Hall of Fame**

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to inform our honoured Assembly today that Muriel Sheldon of rural Prince Albert has been inducted into the Saskatchewan 4-H Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, Mrs. Sheldon's association with 4-H began as a young girl in the Elkhorn 4-H Club and she even attended as a young girl the 4-H girls camp in Prince Albert.

In 1972, Mrs. Sheldon became the leader of the Red Deer Hill 4-H Home Craft Club, encouraging members in knitting, personal development, and entertaining. So dedicated to the club, Mrs. Sheldon would often pick up members for meetings and return them home afterwards.

Mr. Speaker, the club later changed its name to the Red Deer Hill Multiple 4-H Club under Mrs. Sheldon's leadership, and it was during this time she received her 15-year pin. Mrs. Sheldon was a key leader in the Prince Albert district assisting many leaders and clubs in the area.

As a member of the 4-H district council, Mrs. Sheldon encouraged many 4-H members to become leaders, thus ensuring that the 4-H movement will continue to thrive in the years to follow, Mr. Speaker.

Mrs. Sheldon has served with the provincial 4-H council, three of those years as secretary. Mrs. Sheldon continues to serve 4-H at achievement days, encouraging members with their projects and assist with judging at the Prince Albert Exhibition.

Mr. Speaker, community involvement by people such as Muriel Sheldon help us all to set high standards for community service. I ask all members to join me in congratulating Muriel Sheldon of rural Prince Albert on her remarkable recognition.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. I want to mention to all of our guests that our members really do thrive on applause and they like to be applauded.

However, as we get into this sort of competitive part of the routine proceedings, I would ask all visitors to do as the Speaker does, that is sit and listen but you're not able to participate in any way.

#### **Aberdeen's New Emergency Services Building**

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, I was very pleased to attend, along with the member from Humboldt, a large gathering in the town of Aberdeen on behalf of the Minister of Government Relations. And that was a very happy event. It was to celebrate the official opening of the new emergency services building in Aberdeen, which is a joint facility between the town of Aberdeen and the rural municipality of Aberdeen.

The facility's construction was paid for by the town, the RM (rural municipality), and also the province through the Centenary Fund.

(14:00)

And what was very impressive, Mr. Speaker, was not only the co-operation between the town and RM and the province, but that much of the building was constructed by volunteer labour from Aberdeen and area.

And I'm happy to report, Mr. Speaker, that the building itself is very impressive, attractive, and functional. But it would only be an empty shell without the presence and dedication of all of the volunteers in Aberdeen and the RM who are: the local fire department, which is volunteer; the first responders, who of course are volunteer; emergency services; and crime stoppers.

The new building, Mr. Speaker, will improve the safety and well-being of the local community. It is a tribute to the co-operative spirit of the town and the RM and to all the volunteers in that community who strive to help us in time of need and keep our communities safe.

So I know all members, Mr. Speaker, want to join me in congratulating the town, the RM, Fire Chief Paul Martens, the first responders' coordinator, Shirley Huffman, EMO (Emergency Measures Organization) coordinator Paul Newton, and all of the dedicated volunteers in Aberdeen and district on their new facility, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### **Royal Canadian Air Cadets Parade at Yorkton**

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I was extremely pleased to be invited to be the reviewing officer and guest speaker at the 61st annual ceremonial review parade and mess dinner for No. 17 Squadron, Royal Canadian Air Cadets at Yorkton.

The parade was excellent, displaying the skills of the cadets, and it was highlighted by a drill team presentation including silent drill. Many cadets on parade were presented awards honouring their contributions to the cadet program and recognizing their achievements.

I would like to point out five cadets that were chosen for national training scholarships: senior leaders' course, Jordan Craib-Petkau; international exchange to Great Britain is Melissa Prokopetz; glider scholarship, Kyle Fisher; flying scholarship, Christy Persick and David Killen. I'd like to extend

congratulations to these fine cadets. And it's no wonder, Mr. Speaker, that No. 17 Squadron, Yorkton, was chosen as the second best squadron in the province.

Mr. Speaker, members of the Assembly will often hear me praise the merits of the cadet program, and once again I would like to do that. It really is a tremendous youth program and all of the benefits that it offers to our young men and women in this province. Where else can one receive scholarships of this nature?

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the squadron, Commanding Officer Terry Eritz, and his staff for the outstanding year that they've had at 17 Squadron in Yorkton.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Meadow Lake Co-op Expansion

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. More great news from rural Saskatchewan.

The Meadow Lake Co-op unveiled an expansion project at its annual general meeting that will double its grocery store to 28,000 square feet and should be completed by February 2003.

Allan Halter, the general manager of the co-op, said that the renovations will seriously modernize the co-op's facility, and I quote, "It is a competitive growing market and consumers are changing."

The co-op board realized that it must modernize the grocery store in order to retain and attract new customers. The rapidly shifting demographics in the Meadow Lake area show — and pay attention to this — show 80 per cent of the population is under the age of 45. Don't ask, Mr. Speaker.

The store's new modern look will incorporate a deli and prepared foods counter. Ten to twelve new staff will also be hired as part of the expansion. Ron Buck, the president of the Meadow Lake Co-op board of directors, said one of the hardest decisions to make concerning the renovation project was whether to relocate a new grocery store. However, the board opted to stay on Centre Street in the downtown area.

The co-op will also be allocating 6.1 per cent of purchases, or about \$1 million, to its 5,986 members this year, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Swift Current Fundraising Events

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Southwest Saskatchewan has always been known for its heart. And I should like to highlight three recent successful fundraising events in my home community to underscore the point.

First is the Ability Bowl which was held at the end of April, Mr. Speaker. The annual bowling fundraiser for the Swift Current branch of the Saskatchewan Abilities Council attracted over 300 participants and raised over \$61,000, shattering last year's

record of \$59,000. Congratulations to Irene Enns, the regional director of the Swift Current branch of the Abilities Council, and the 50-plus volunteers who made Ability Bowl 14 another success.

Mr. Speaker, there were also two fundraisers held outdoors this past weekend in Swift Current. On Friday night the southwest chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society held its first ever Relay for Life at the Riverside Park in Swift Current. The event began with 132 cancer survivors taking part in a victory lap at the start of the relay. In total, almost \$44,000 was raised for cancer research. Hats off to Margo Trembath and the organizing committee, and to friends and relatives of cancer survivors and victims who gathered for the Relay for Life.

Also this weekend, Mr. Speaker, I was proud to take part in the fourth annual Mr. Sub Big Brothers/Big Sisters golf tournament. It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon at the Chinook golf course in Swift Current for the 124 golfers who golfed in the event. But more importantly — and most importantly, Mr. Speaker — over \$10,000 was raised for the local Big Brothers/Big Sisters organizations. Congratulations to the organizers of all three events and to everyone who donated to these worthy causes.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Saskatchewan Union of Nurses President Comments on Tobacco Issues

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The president of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, Rosalee Longmoore, has added her voice to the thousands of health care professionals that support the leadership of this government in a real commitment to ending the promotion of tobacco products to those under 18.

In Friday's *StarPhoenix*, Ms. Longmoore pointed out that her years as a nurse have exposed her to first-hand accounts of people fighting for each breath.

She talked about the amounts of poisonous substances in cigarettes such as arsenic, benzene, and hydrogen cyanide. She praised the courage that this government has had in standing up to the tobacco companies.

Mr. Speaker, as Ms. Longmoore indicated, those most at risk are children and youth. Exposure to tobacco ads and promotions can turn children into nicotine addicts.

Statistics show that a 15-year-old teenager who smokes is twice as likely to die before the age of 70 as a 15-year-old who never takes a puff.

The justification for this legislation is forged from the same philosophy as universal medicare. A compassionate society looks out for its people and promotes a healthy lifestyle.

Further to that, we also thank all health care professionals for their support on this issue and their continued vigorous participation in helping this government create and implement good public policy. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORAL QUESTIONS

### Financial Support for Agriculture from the Federal Government

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago, government, opposition, and farm leaders from the three Prairie provinces met with a number of federal ministers to discuss Ottawa's response to the new US (United States) farm Bill.

Federal ministers, including Paul Martin, said they were committed to finding new financial assistance for Canadian farmers. Since that time — as the Premier no doubt knows — there have been a couple of changes. Ralph Goodale has a new job; Paul Martin lost his job. And now we are concerned that the interests of Canadian farmers may be overlooked in all of this Liberal kerfuffle.

Mr. Speaker, has the Premier heard anything from Ottawa in the last few days? Is the federal government moving forward on a trade injury package that will assist Saskatchewan producers?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I have not in the last 24 hours had any conversations or word from the nation's capital. But I'm sure I would enjoy the support of the Leader of the Opposition in saying that from our point of view, from the point of view of Western Canadians, from the point of view of Canadian producers, and Western Canadian producers, we assume that commitments made by the former Minister of Finance federally, will be honoured by the current Minister of Finance, and commitments made by the federal government in their willingness to understand the need of Canadian producers and the need to provide support, 100 per cent from Ottawa in the case of trade injury. I'm sure that the Leader of the Opposition and I share the view that the federal government will maintain those commitments.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know now that the federal government is consumed with some of its own internal problems and we are hoping that the Canadian farmers do not get lost in the shuffle.

Mr. Speaker, at the meeting which occurred on May 24, we were all very encouraged that Paul Martin, the Finance minister of the day, took part and he was committed to finding new money for farmers. We hope that the momentum that has been building on this issue will not be lost in the change of ministers.

Mr. Speaker, today I have written the new Minister of Finance asking him to follow through on the commitments made by his colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, rather than waiting for them to call us, I would ask the Premier, has he called the new Finance minister to ensure that things are still on track?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, to ensure, as we have from

this legislature and from my own office, that this issue which is a priority not just for Saskatchewan producers, but for Canadian producers and for Canadian citizens, to ensure that this agenda continues to move forward, I intend, tomorrow, to attend to the Western premiers' gathering where we will gather the premiers of all four western provinces and the leaders of the territories.

I take this issue to be my single most important issue in going to that meeting, and I am confident that the issue will receive the importance it deserves from my colleagues.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Workers' Compensation Board

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for Workers' Compensation Board.

Last week the Provincial Auditor's report included an indictment of the gross financial management of the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board). He said basic monthly updates on revenues, expenses, and liabilities were not being provided to board members. And the Provincial Auditor said even the most basic month to month financial monitoring was not happening.

The result, Mr. Speaker? The WCB lost a massive \$56 million last year, and the minister's response was typical of the NDP (New Democratic Party) government: no big deal. A \$56 million loss — don't worry, be happy.

Mr. Speaker, what specific actions have been taken by the minister to ensure that WCB won't be mismanaged to the tune of \$56 million again this year?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Workers' Compensation Board released these details when I tabled the report in this House some four weeks ago, Mr. Speaker.

The Provincial Auditor again addressed his concerns when the Provincial Auditor's report was released last week. The board has taken steps to improve financial statements at meetings with their board members and taken steps to have more current information available at those. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, it's alarming enough that the NDP has allowed the WCB to manage with such financial incompetence. What's even more disturbing is that the minister isn't all that worried about taking action to fix the problems.

The minister told reporters last week that no major changes will take place at WCB until July at the earliest — no plans to hire a full-time actuary to work with the board; no plans to get rid of NDP hack John Solomon as the Chair of WCB, even though he is clearly incompetent. Mr. Speaker, that means the WCB will continue to make decisions affecting thousands of businesses and workers without even the most basic understanding of the impact of those decisions will have on the WCB's operations.



Will the minister assure the legislature that no decisions about payment rates or program structure will be made at WCB until action is taken to fix the massive financial mess identified by the auditors?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, while name calling and making kind of off-base comments about the Workers' Compensation Board, this board has come through some very tough times over the last decade. They have handled problems and worked through them with the employers and injured workers.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the results across the province . . . or across Canada, the BC (British Columbia) WCB had a loss of 287 million. The shortfall in Saskatchewan was nowhere near that. The board remains funded. It has drawn down reserve funds to cover the shortfall of this year with the increase in actuarial adjustment. But, Mr. Speaker, our board is still 100 per cent funded and still maintains the second-lowest rates across Canada.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Minister of Labour, who is the third minister of Labour in three years should go . . . take notice, go back to her office, get her staff together, and be briefed by her staff, and come back at some time with the information that we've been asking.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, the net effect of the minister's apparent lack of . . .

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

(14:15)

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, the net effect of the minister's lack of understanding of how WCB operates and the obvious incompetence of the NDP's hand-picked WCB chairman, John Solomon, is that the WCB lost \$56 million last year. And now businesses are bracing for what WCB officials are saying could be double-digit rate increases.

Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps telling us the WCB fund is fully funded. What she seems to forget is that WCB is fully funded by the employers, by Saskatchewan businesses. And those businesses are being told by senior WCB officials to brace for double-digit rate increases.

Will the minister make the commitment today that the combination of her own failed political leadership and the profound incompetence of the NDP's hand-picked WCB chairman will not result in rate increases for Saskatchewan businesses?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now I can assure the member across the floor that the WCB has made the

commitment that there will not be any mid-term increases in the year 2002.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a question that was recycled from a couple of weeks ago, and it's the same thing. The member opposite criticizes boards but, Mr. Speaker, he is in effect criticizing private boards right across this country when you look at *The Globe and Mail* in April which said that the top 100 pension plans across this country lost money on their investment income for the first time in 22 years.

Mr. Speaker, we are not an island unto ourselves here in Saskatchewan, the outside world does affect us. And, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can cry, the sky is falling, as often as they like but we will weather it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What should happen is the Premier call an election and the fourth Labour minister in four years will come from the Saskatchewan Party, and the Saskatchewan Party will start regaining the confidence and stability in the WCB.

Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor has clearly shown the WCB was making . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Speaker, the Provincial Auditor has clearly shown the WCB was making important decisions last year about the benefit program payouts without even the most basic information about how those changes would impact the WCB liabilities in the long term. For example, the WCB decision to increase independent allowance payments last year would add millions of dollars in new liabilities that would have to be bankrolled by employers. To make matters worse, over the past two years, WCB's operating expenses have gone up by a whopping 48 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister assure Saskatchewan businesses that no further decisions will be made that add costs to the WCB and push WCB rates even higher until the board members are given full information about the long-term financial impact and a full-time actuary has been hired to work with WCB board members?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we went over this a couple of weeks ago when the report was first released and then we went over it again when the Provincial Auditor's report was released.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the member opposite that the ratio of administration expense to accessible payroll is lower than most WCBs across Canada. Mr. Speaker, and the increase is . . . or the . . . the administration expenses represent 14 per cent of the total cost of WCB expenses, while 82 per cent goes directly to wage/lost benefits, health care, vocational rehabilitation expenses for work injuries, Mr. Speaker, that

happen here, in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we have a good board. They have weathered some times.

The members can holler the sky's falling, the sky's falling, but I don't remember them doing that during the late '90s when we were paying out rebates to employers because of excessive revenues.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Infant Mortality Rate and Child Poverty

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Canadian Institute of Health Information issued a report which indicated that Saskatchewan has the second highest infant mortality rate in this country. This is the second time in one week we heard about a national report focusing on this discouraging statistic.

Almost nine out of every 1,000 babies born in this province die before they reach their first birthday. And the cities of Regina, North Battleford, and Prince Albert post infant mortality rates that are almost twice the national average. This is totally unacceptable. Doctors attribute the main causes to poor social and economic conditions in this province and substance abuse.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government can do a lot to address the causes. But under the NDP government, babies are dying at an alarming rate. What is the minister and his department doing to try and turn this situation around?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Shortly, we'll be releasing the vital statistics information from our province and we will show that the statistic that the member is referring to from, I think, back in 1998 or '99 has improved dramatically as we have worked together on this particular field.

The other thing I would like to emphasize is that we have introduced the Kids First program which deals with many of the issues around the newborn and the families and others who are caring for young people. And together with the Minister of Social Services and the Minister of Education, we have been working with communities to identify families at risk to make sure that we provide the appropriate care for young people and especially for infants, because we know this is a concern and we're going to continue to do that with the people of the province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the infant mortality rates are a reflection on the level of poverty that many babies are born into in the province of Saskatchewan. And there's proof that poverty follows these children.

The NDP's own Role of the School report indicates that poverty affects an alarming number of school-aged and preschool-aged children in Saskatchewan. The report says that Saskatoon has one of the highest rates of children under the age of five living in poverty and that fully one-quarter of preschool-aged children

in the province are poor.

Saskatchewan poverty rate for children seven years of age and younger is 4 per cent higher than the national average. It also states that this province has the second highest incidence of children using food banks in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the infant mortality numbers are an indicator of a much larger problem faced by people living in poverty in Saskatchewan. Why are the infant mortality rates and the number of children living in poverty rising under the NDP government?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, in all of Canada since 1993, there was only one province that can claim to have the child poverty reduced by 30 per cent, the fastest falling poverty rate for children in all of the nation, right here in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, this is a government that has taken this issue very seriously. The Kids First program, the early childhood development program the Minister of Health referred to; the Minister of Learning together with other departments talking about the School<sup>PLUS</sup> program; and, Mr. Speaker, in the building independence program, since introduced in 1998, there has been a reduction of 6,000 families fewer who are on welfare today. And most importantly, Mr. Speaker, in Saskatchewan today there are 13,000 fewer kids growing up on welfare than just four years ago.

Mr. Speaker, there is a province that can be claiming to be leading the nation in the attack on child poverty and that is our province of Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Speaker, it doesn't matter what this minister says, we still have the second highest number of children dying of infant mortality so it doesn't . . . maybe we've improved but only compared to yourself. Look at the rest of the provinces.

Mr. Speaker, substance abuse is a contributing factor to the large number of infant deaths in Saskatchewan. Dr. George Carson, in charge of maternal/fetal medicine in Regina, believes that between 10 and 15 per cent of infant deaths can be attributed to substance abuse by the mother. He says there isn't enough money and enough help in this province for pregnant women struggling with drug and alcohol addictions because space at the very few detox centres we have is extremely limited. If a baby survives his mother's substance abuse, the child himself often ends up to have fetal alcohol syndrome or fetal alcohol effect. And then you have two people with substance abuse — the mother and the child.

Mr. Speaker, what is the government doing to address substance abuse in expectant mothers, which in turn will reduce infant mortality rates and the number of children that have fetal alcohol syndrome and the fetal alcohol effect?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as part of our Kids First program we are working together with Social Services, Health, and Education to identify children at risk and families at risk. And what we then do is have the various services that are available to the people around these at-risk kids have priority spots for the ones that are affected.

So for alcohol and drug services, their program guidelines state very clearly that there's priority access for addiction treatment for pregnant women and for ones that are at risk. And what we then do is make sure that those people do get into the facilities where they need to be.

We are working with all of the people in the community, all of the professionals to make sure that we provide the kind of care that's needed, and we will continue to work with those people because that's where the good care takes place.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

### Water Quality Concerns

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this session we raised concerns on behalf of the community of Perdue. Perdue residents are dealing with an aging water treatment system, they're facing capital improvement costs to their system of between 3 and \$400,000.

The community has applied to the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program three times and they've been rejected each and every time. Their application was reviewed again this spring after their water system totally collapsed. But again they were denied, Mr. Speaker. Now the community has been forced to issue a restriction notice to its residents because only one green sand filter is operational in its water treatment plant.

Mr. Speaker, this community's water situation is desperate. To the minister: what are SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) and Sask Water doing to assist Perdue with their water difficulties?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, very quickly we will be unveiling a lot of our plans that we have in reference to meeting some of the water challenges in this province.

And I would point out, Mr. Speaker, that we have very clearly defined the role of Sask Water, Mr. Speaker. We've moving forward on the Watershed Authority, Mr. Speaker. We're moving forward without question, Mr. Speaker, on a five-year, \$170 million federal, provincial, and local CSIP (Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program) program to help communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, we've said time and time again that if a community has challenges, it has problems, approach Sask Water, approach the province. We will stand with them, we will work with them. It's going to take us some time; this problem did not occur overnight, Mr. Speaker. It'll certainly take us many more times of the effort to make sure that we're able to

provide some solutions.

So the problem wasn't created overnight, Mr. Speaker, it's not going to be solved overnight. Now I'd ask that member once again to co-operate. We will fix these problems, we will work our way through. Thank you very much.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well isn't it interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the minister refers the citizens of Perdue to a program that doesn't even exist.

Mr. Speaker, Perdue's notice says, and I quote:

If necessary we may have to shut off the water supply nightly from midnight to 6 a.m. to allow our reservoir to catch up. We are required to have a certain amount of water on reserve in case of fire.

Mr. Speaker, the last letter Sask Water sent to the town of Perdue is dated April 8, and it says, quote:

Both the water supply infrastructure and the water treatment facilities are in need of maintenance, refurbishment, and capital upgrades.

It goes on to say, and I quote again, Mr. Speaker:

Given that Perdue does in fact have a health risk associated with its water supply, Perdue may be a candidate for infrastructure grants.

Mr. Speaker, Sask Water acknowledges the severe problems with Perdue's water and the health risks. Is recommending Perdue apply to a non-existent program the best the minister can do?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, we have pointed out time and time again there are a number of communities that we have worked with over the past number of months and past number of years to try and resolve some of the long-standing water challenge issues that we have talked about for the last number of months.

Now what I would point out, Mr. Speaker, is that Perdue, like many of the other communities, they certainly have to come forward and they certainly have to work with Sask Water and certainly work with SERM and also work with government affairs to make sure that they are able to pursue any option available to them to assist in many of the challenges that they face.

But in the meantime, Mr. Speaker, let me say this, is that if they have any challenges . . .

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

(14:30)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — If they have any challenges, Mr.

Speaker, if they have any problems with their water quality, what we're going to do, Mr. Speaker, is going to advise the public. We're not going to take any chance of putting public health at risk.

And that's one of the reasons why we have the boil-water advisories. That's one of the reasons why we have the increasing number of rules and regulations we have. That is why we have the awareness campaign, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, Perdue in fact was offered another option, and that was to enter into a water supply contract with Sask Water at a cost much greater than if Perdue was able to fix their water system problems with the help of an infrastructure program. Mr. Speaker, what kind of help is that?

Towns and villages facing water concerns have been calling on the NDP government to establish an emergency fund to access when water quality problems become extreme, such as the case in Perdue. In April SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) called for a new water specific infrastructure program to help Saskatchewan communities.

Mr. Speaker, what have the NDP or what has the minister done about establishing that program and what have they done about establishing an emergency reserve fund that communities can access in extreme situations such as this?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of communities in Saskatchewan that have taken the lead in solving some of their problems and as a government we commend those communities. We have said good for the communities that have not waited, that have taken the initiative. They have provided many solutions on their own, Mr. Speaker.

Now in reference to Perdue we have said time and time again there are three very clear options for financing. The Municipal Financing Corporation has said they would assist, Mr. Speaker. I announced a \$170 million, five-year program that the federal government, local governments, and the province have set up to assist the communities like Perdue, Mr. Speaker.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, don't forget, we have said many communities out there have come up with their own solutions. Now we ask Perdue . . . they also have some avenues of support, Mr. Speaker: they can bill their clients for water, Mr. Speaker; they have a tax base, and they may have some savings. So every community in the province has to do their part, as we will, Mr. Speaker.

So the most important thing is: we have a plan, we have a strategy, we're going to work with every community, a lot of communities. And Perdue is one of the many communities that have challenges and we will work with absolutely every one of those communities, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, either borrow the money or if you can't borrow the money we'll come in, we'll take it over and charge you an exorbitant fee to do it.

Mr. Speaker, in April a boil-water order was issued in Maple Creek after some residents were infected with E. coli. After several weeks, that order was reduced to a boil-water advisory. And at this time, Mr. Speaker, Maple Creek residents are still advised to boil their water. There has been no public indication from SERM as to the source of the original E. coli infection. There have also been no indications as to how long Maple Creek residents shall remain under the boil-water advisory.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister update this Assembly of the status of the Maple Creek water supply, whether or not the source of the E. coli has been determined and how long residents will remain under the advisory?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, once again, as I've stated in this Assembly time and time again, is that we will not take a chance with public health. Paramount to us is the safety of the public health and the people that are affected by the . . .

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very important that once we issue a boil-water advisory or a boil-water order, SERM has to be totally satisfied that a number of tests come back that are negative and that they are clean and they're given a safe bill of health to operate. Until such time that we get that assurance, Mr. Speaker, we're not going to lift any boil-water orders or advisories.

Now what I'll tell that member is very clear — there's no shortcuts in this game. We have to make sure we make every effort, and every team player has a process to undertake and we have to make sure that these systems are safe. And we'll not take a chance and any shortcut, Mr. Speaker, to lift any advisory until we're absolutely sure that the public health is not being threatened, Mr. Speaker.

And shame on that member for suggesting any kind of shortcuts. This is a serious business, Mr. Speaker. There are some serious challenges to be met. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Why is the Premier on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion to honour Saskatchewan's Olympians.

Leave granted.

## MOTIONS

### Recognition of Saskatchewan Olympians

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member from Rosetown-Biggar:

That this Assembly recognize the achievement of

Saskatchewan's 2001 Special Winter Olympians, the 2002 Paralympians, and the 2002 Winter Olympians and the contributions they have made to Canada's greatest success ever in these Olympic events.

I so move.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to.

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Mr. Speaker, I ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion to recess.

Leave granted.

#### Recess of Assembly

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Cannington:

That this Assembly do now recess until 4 o'clock to honour the Saskatchewan Olympians, and that this Assembly reconvene at the call of the Speaker ringing the bell five minutes in advance of reconvening.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**The Assembly recessed for a period of time.**

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill No. 65 — The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2002

**Hon. Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 65, The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

##### Bill No. 66 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2002

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 66, The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

(16:00)

##### Bill No. 69 — The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Amendment Act, 2002

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 69, The Saskatchewan Applied Science Technologists and Technicians Amendment Act, 2002 be now introduced and

read for the first time.

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

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government today and table written responses to questions no. 254 and 255.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to 254 and 255 have been tabled.

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs Vote 30

#### Subvote (GR01)

**The Chair:** — I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, before we do that, I'd like to ask leave of the Assembly to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and my hon. colleagues. I'd like to introduce to you a member that's sitting in the Speaker's gallery who is the Speaker from Nunavut, a long-time friend of mine; and I very much appreciate seeing Speaker Kevin O'Brien come here to the Legislative Assembly to visit. He does have other business; he has some family in Moose Jaw and has been good enough to pop in and just to say hello.

I would ask all members to please give him a good Saskatchewan welcome.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs Vote 30

#### Subvote (GR01)

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd now like to introduce the officials that are here to assist me this afternoon. To my right is deputy minister, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Mr. Brent Cotter; Mr. Larry Steeves is on my left, associate deputy minister of municipal relations; John Edwards, who is the executive director of policy development; Russ Krywulak, who is the director of grants administration,

provincial municipal relations.

Also with us here this afternoon is Mr. Doug Morcom, who is a director of grants administration; Mr. Ralph Leibel, who is the manager of community planning; Ms. Wanda Lamberti, executive director of finance, administration, and information technology; and last but certainly not least, Mr. Chairman, Marj Abel, who is the director of finance and administration.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and before I start I too would like to join with the minister on behalf of the official opposition and welcome the Speaker from Nunavut to the House today. And I hope he finds his time in Saskatchewan both enjoyable and educational so welcome. And good afternoon to you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials.

Mr. Minister, given the forest fire . . . extreme forest fire hazard that we're facing in the province today, I think that everyone's very well aware that as many measures as possible are going to have to be taken in order to try and alleviate the risk as much as we possibly can.

And I actually asked this question of your colleague, the minister for Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management the other day and he indicated that perhaps your department was in a better position to be able to answer it. And the question is, Mr. Minister, what guidelines or regulations exist within your department with respect to the amount of water reserves that must be maintained by an urban community, by an urban municipality, in order to fight fires?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I'm not really certain whether there might be any provisions to insist that municipalities ensure that they have certain water that's available to put into reserves. But I do recognize the importance and the seriousness of the question that the member is asking. And again, this is not taken lightly and this is not a frivolous matter, I want to assure the House.

And I know the member knows that local firefighting is in fact a local responsibility. But however given some of the exceptional circumstances that do exist in our province in this given spring of the year and then going into summer, there will be a need . . . and there are some discussions with respect to some decision items and considerations that will definitely need to be discussed with cabinet and with other available resources. So we can address this issue, serious issue that we're faced with during this time of the year, and then perhaps look at some options for the future that may help alleviate some of the serious problems we're facing now.

And it's unfortunate, but again as we all know and have experienced in our life I'm sure, that necessity is always the mother of invention. And those resources and plans, emergency plans that have been in existence, will now perhaps need to be redesigned, revised, revisited, and expanded upon.

So once again, to engage the larger community in order to ensure that whatever the serious situation may arise — whether it be in the northern part of the province or the southern part of the province — that there's some ability to engage everybody that's involved in the province; not just sit back and say, well, I'm sure glad they're having those problems in the North and

I'm glad we're not having them and we don't have to worry about them. I think that we need to look beyond that to say that well, it's unfortunate, we'll do the best we can and contribute to assisting people that are in trouble at this point because down the road there may need to be some reciprocity in the event that, I think, mother nature turns around and challenges another part of our province.

So I'm not sure if I've specifically answered what I believe your question was with respect to maintaining a reserve water supply, but if — and I know I've probably given you some information in a global sense — but if it was in fact dealing with having a water supply in reserve, that perhaps may be something that we'll have to certainly, certainly look at as well.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and Mr. Chair. One of the concerns that a lot of the communities that are having difficulty with their water supplies is that they may not have adequate supplies in case of a fire. And I know in the situation in Perdue right now, for example, right in their notice of restriction they actually indicated that they were going to be cutting off the water supply from midnight till 6 a.m. in the morning because there was a requirement that they have a certain amount of water in reserve for firefighting purposes.

Now when I asked the Minister of Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management the other day, Mr. Minister, he indicated that perhaps those guidelines, as he described them, were the jurisdiction of your department or perhaps were coming from the Fire Commissioner's office.

But for all intents and purpose, the understanding is, is that there are guidelines in place for urban municipalities that detail the amount of water that they must have in reserve at any one time for firefighting purposes. And, Mr. Minister, it would be most helpful if you could describe what those guidelines are, within whose jurisdiction it is that they fall, and what the specific requirements are.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The answers and the guidelines would be more likely to be under the control of the Fire Commissioner's office. And if the member is aware that with the change in our configuration, that would come under Public Safety and Corrections.

And I'd be happy to obtain those guidelines for the member, dealing specifically with the type of emergent situations that have been raised with respect to Perdue. And I do believe — I can't say specifically — but I know that we can have access to that information and I'd be happy to get it for you.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And perhaps just to follow up a bit with the situation in Perdue itself, can you give us an update as to where the negotiations with the community stand at this point in terms of future funding for the required upgrades?

I understand they're looking, possibly in the neighbourhood of \$400,000 or better for their upgrades, that their request for funding was once again declined — the current request.

But now once again we see that they're in a situation where they're down to one green sand filter. Their output has been so

drastically reduced that they are having to limit the amount of time that water is available in the community. They're shutting the . . . basically shutting the system down between midnight and 6 a.m. in the morning. And they do have as well this overriding concern about needing to maintain a certain amount of reserve for firefighting purposes should they need it.

But, Mr. Minister, where is the community at? I think you've had an opportunity to meet with them personally on a number of occasions and I think certainly should understand some of the difficulties that they have faced over the course of the last 6 months to a year. And I can assure you, Mr. Minister, that they do not feel at this point that their needs are being adequately met.

So perhaps if you could just give us a bit of an update as to the status of any requests, funding requests that Perdue may have forwarded to your department.

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The issue that the member raises with respect to Perdue, I'm pleased to address that. And first and foremost what I'd like to point out, that I am advised that Perdue does not at this point have a precautionary drinking water advisory or boil-water issue. So that's good news.

From the other side of the coin with respect to their applications under the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, once again we've discussed the fact that there's so much money, that the tri-part agreement allows for projects that communities, municipalities apply for. Perdue's initial application was reviewed and rated by the project review committee.

(16:15)

And I believe it's important that we understand the project review committee that's made up of SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), members from SARM and SUMA, the federal and provincial governments.

On their application for 2002-2003, similarly to other smaller communities that perhaps may have been bordering on similar problems with their water supplies and/or infrastructure, their application did not rate high enough to be approved for the 2002-2003 season. And if you'll . . . fiscal year. And if you'll recall, the applications had to be in well in advance of the end of 2002. I believe it was by mid-October if I remember correctly.

So then you could appreciate that there are hundreds of applications that are received and there needs to be a process followed, which the project review committee follows and awards a point system to determine where the most urgent needs are.

And at that time Perdue, and as I mention, other communities in similar situations, were not also eligible because of their rating, their emergency rating not being high enough. However, at the request of the village of Perdue the project review committee once again met on March 13 and I believe what had happened, if I recall correctly, the situation in Perdue had further deteriorated into the spring of the year. However that was well after monies had been committed to all the other projects that

had in fact been approved.

The project review committee having met with Perdue, still did not feel that there was any basis for changing the decision that had been made on the request for their project. So there was no recommendation for approval of that funding for 2002-2003.

Perdue was made aware of this by the project review committee and the committee still acknowledged that while Perdue has problems with their water systems, the problems are not as great as some other communities that required immediate funding to go after their projects.

So the management committee has again encouraged Perdue to apply once again for this program that's in existence for another three years.

We had a successful program in 2001-2002 . . . 2002-2003, there will be in the vicinity of some \$35 million that will go into these types of projects. And the applications for 2003-2004 will be in the mail probably by the end of July and communities such as Perdue will require those applications to be resubmitted.

And again with the problems that we're facing — and I'm sure the members will agree that you need to address the most critical, and ensure that people are given the utmost of consideration — that has nothing to do with members on the government side; it has to do with SARM, SUMA, two members of the federal and provincial departments that make up the project review committee. And it's a federal/provincial program and the federal government has in fact laid down some fairly serious criteria that needs . . . the project review committee needs to follow.

And they need as well to make sure that they're being fair in the assessment and treatment of all the applications that they receive — and there are hundreds of them — and unfortunately only a small portion of them can in fact be approved because of the availability of the funds.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, I think the thing that the community finds most puzzling is that they have made application on a number of occasions to the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program and their proposals have been declined.

But yet at the same time, Sask Water is prepared to go into Perdue, they're prepared to take over the water treatment facilities, basically everything from source to treatment. The town, however, would still be responsible for everything after the treatment plant right through to the tap.

Now in talking to various councillors in the community, they're suggesting that, at the end of the day, that will be a by far more costly solution because the amount of money that Sask Water is suggesting that they would require in order to assume responsibility for their part of the operation, in addition to what it would continue to cost the town for everything that is their responsibility between the water treatment plant and the tap would, at the end of the day, be far more expensive than if they were simply allowed to proceed and do the work that needs to be done and continue to maintain and operate the facility themselves.

So I guess a couple of questions as a result of that, Mr. Minister. First of all, does the project review committee consult with Sask Water? Are they aware of what Sask Water is proposing in these communities while at the same time they may be making proposals to the infrastructure program? Is there any attempt whatsoever at coordinating the activities of your program and the activities of Sask Water? And does anyone look at, ultimately, the bottom line and what would be the more responsible approach for both parties — for both the government and for the community?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, in response to the question with respect to Sask Water's being contacted and discussions between the project review committee, yes they do have . . . the project review committee does in fact discuss the various projects with Sask Water.

I don't want to . . . I hope the issue is not confused. Because it is important here to understand as well that the . . . Sask Water has recognized that part of Perdue's problem is the inadequate water supply. And if in fact they do go in to consult and offer their services, it will . . . it would in fact be on a cost-recovery basis, not unlike it would be if the community went ahead on their own and hired their own engineers and technicians to fix their problem, to overcome their problem.

And the communities, not unlike some of the communities that did in fact of their own volition even prior to this Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, recognizing that perhaps there was a need to fix their water problems, or the infrastructure, and to ensure a good quality drinking water, went ahead without any opportunity for assistance under any grant programs.

They took that initiative, recognizing that yes, it is the municipality's responsibilities to ensure good quality drinking water. And now it . . . now that we have this program, communities are saying, well we can't get any money and yet these other folks do have access to money. But that's the way the grant programs unfortunately work.

There's no retroactivity for those communities that did in fact go to the Municipal Financing Corporation or dipped into their own reserves or some kind of long-term debt to fix their problems immediately, on an immediate basis, and addressed . . . met those challenges head-on.

And that's not unlike what the opportunities continue to exist for these other communities — and I know that's not the kind of answers that the member wants to hear and that the communities don't like to hear — but those are the options. Either the long-term debt financing, Municipal Financing Corporation, or using reserves from the municipality to meet head-on immediately any challenges with respect to ensuring good quality drinking water for their communities.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, one of the observations that I might make is, is that I think there is a bit of a difference in terms of if the community was provided with the resources in order to be able to go ahead and do their own work versus Sask Water coming in; the community at the end of the day would have control over their costs. When somebody else, a third party, comes in and, I mean, is basically

going to assume responsibility for the entire operation, then they have no control over those costs, Mr. Minister.

But I want to follow up with something else that you and I spoke about a number of months ago and that was that we are going to be running into these situations where we're going to have — across the province — we're going to have a well go down somewhere, we're going to have breakdowns, we're going to have plants that for whatever reason overnight literally could become inoperable. And in those situations those communities may not have anticipated those difficulties; it may have been something that was completely unforeseen. And yet by the same token, they're not in a position to be able to delay the necessary repairs in order to continue providing water to their community.

So one of the things that we had discussed was perhaps setting aside a small amount of the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program funding in order to meet those kinds of needs where there were basically emergency situations developing.

Have you been able to develop that kind of a fund? Have you been able to set aside a certain amount of resources that could be utilized in an emergency situation?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the member for the question. And I also want to thank the member because I do believe as a result of some of our discussions that that type of initiative, the seed was planted. So I want to say thank you for that.

I just want to underline that that again going back to Sask Water and the communities that avail themselves of Sask Water's knowledge and technical availabilities, that communities are not compelled to go to Sask Water. They can make whatever choices they want for whomever they wish to come in and review their problems, and get estimates or get advice.

Sask Water is there to assist, but if Sask Water is engaged — and I'm sure the member will agree — that it needs to be done on a cost recovery basis, no different than other communities that do go to private enterprise to have the similar types of assessments or evaluations of their situations.

Now to the good part, what we discussed about perhaps reserves. Yes, that is being considered now by the project review committee for 2003-2004 where in fact there will be — and whatever the portion is and perhaps it wouldn't even be fair to consider what it might be at this point — but that this has been taken into consideration, that there will be a contingency amount to address a real serious problem that may occur in the spring of the year after the money has been committed.

And once again, that's going to make it . . . it's going to be imperative that the criteria that's set for what's an emergency . . . and then sometimes is difficult to determine what do you plan and how do you plan for an emergency. You can be prepared, but how prepared do you need to be particularly from the financial aspect; like how much money do you hold back from projects that could get underway in the event that — July, August, or March, or whatever — we have a real break in something that needs immediate attention.



But I guess the . . . I'm happy to give you the answer that we talked about and there will be some contingency monies, fund, whatever you want to call it, considered by the project review committee for the future Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, now at the other end of the spectrum, in my constituency, I have had a number of communities approach me because they have been approved through the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, but for whatever reason were unable to come up with their contribution, the local municipal portion that's required in order to proceed with the project. And that may have been for any number of reasons. There may have been other pressing matters where they had to spend larger sums of money than what were anticipated.

Now if a community is approved for a project but they can't come up with their portion prior to the end of that fiscal year, do they then lose the funding?

(16:30)

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, under those situations, if a community finds they can't complete their project and are financially strapped, they can in fact ask the review committee to roll it over into the subsequent year. But at the end of the day, I guess if the member's asking if they can skirt paying their portion, I guess the straight answer is no. They would be expected to live up to their commitment for their portion of that funding for that project.

It can be delayed into another year with permission from the committee — from the project committee. So there's needs to be . . . we need to talk to one another and make sure that nothing is jeopardized or lost for the community and to maintain the integrity of the program and the process.

**Mr. Kwiatkowski:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Just very quickly, I would like to ask you about the declaration of a state of emergency. Could you explain what the requirements are for a declaration of a state of emergency by an urban municipality? And are you aware of the situation in Nipawin where a state of emergency was declared? Are you aware of the Premier's commitment that was made as a result of that declaration of a state of emergency? And what are the criteria that communities would follow in terms of declaring a state of emergency and what types of benefits or what types of access to resources should they expect as a result of that declaration of a state of emergency?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, the . . . we are aware and the member will be aware, there is the provincial disaster assistance program that has certain criteria required to . . . for communities to qualify for assistance under that program which, I want to say, that is currently now being administered by Corrections and Public Safety department.

In response to what is considered a disaster, I'm not sure there is anything that's spelled out specifically — if you meet this criteria you're a disaster. I'm referring to what the member is as far as communities getting into trouble. So I don't . . . I do not believe there are any specific definitions of what constitutes a

disaster. The provincial disaster assistance program provides help for people that have lost property that's not insurable, or that's not been insured, or not insurable as a result of a loss through an act of God.

But for more specific — and with all due respect I would defer to Public Safety and Corrections for the specific criteria for the provincial disaster assistance program. But globally, I'm not aware of any specific, any specific definition.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, I want to follow up with the minister in regards to . . . Sask Water actually, in their discussion with communities and certainly municipal government in their revenue sharing and how they provide the revenue for communities and especially in regards to water, water services.

And I know the community of Wawota . . . And, Mr. Minister, you'll be aware of this, last year we talked about it a fair bit. Wawota was a community that a number of years ago realized that they might be facing some difficulties — and this was even before Walkerton and before the North Battleford situation — and started to look at their infrastructure and their water treatment facilities and whether or not it would meet the needs of their community, and felt that it was imperative that they actually expand their water treatment plant. Actually that they rebuild their water treatment plant is what they ended up doing. And I think it was to the tune of over \$1 million, in that neighbourhood anyway or just give or take a few dollars.

And so they put together a proposal, and I believe they came to the government at that time; they went to the federal government, they went and looked at every avenue that was suggested. They talked about the disaster program and to some of the other avenues. I don't think there was a stone left unturned when they tried to put their project together and get some assistance as they built their water treatment plant.

Needless to say, the community of Wawota felt it was very imperative that they take into consideration the safety and their responsibility as town councillors, and they moved ahead and built their water treatment facility. And they did it on their own. They had to actually go to their ratepayers and seek their assistance in building and refurbishing their water treatment plant.

On the other hand, the community of Kipling did the same thing. They did a number of . . . they did some studying and originally they brought a proposal forward to the department and at that time it was, I either believe '99 or 2000, and there was something like \$200,000 that they had applied for. There was a mini-grant to do a study, I believe, of their project to determine whether or not it was something that they should actually begin to move on.

And at that time they had applied for and they had received notification that yes, their project would qualify, and then the new federal infrastructure program came into place. And when they realized the magnitude of their water treatment project and upgrading their water treatment plant, they put in place their application and qualified for a substantial amount of funds.

And I believe when they applied for the new infrastructure

money they were . . . first of all, the community had come to me because they had run out of time. There was a time period for that initial funding to be allocated and given and for them to follow up and put in place their project proposal. And they were asking me if — came to me as their MLA — and asking if I could go to talk to the department at that time whether that could be extended. In the meantime, this infrastructure money came available and so they made applications to that and just let what was left fall by the wayside from the original project and are currently moving ahead with their new water treatment facility.

So I guess the problem that we have, Mr. Minister, is because of the fact that programs come and go and communities can't always guess when there might be a program to help with a current upgrading project at the municipal level. And if they feel it's necessary to move ahead like in Wawota's case, rather than putting it off and putting it off and trying to make do with what they had, went ahead on their own.

And then Kipling comes along and Kipling gets some funding and actually has a major portion of federal/provincial funding for their water treatment facility.

So there's two concerns here. And the one is that Wawota felt that the load was placed, the burden was placed on them.

And then we come . . . Another point was raised by my colleague, the member from Carrot River Valley. One of the councillors just said to me recently at a trade fair, he said, is it true that Sask Water has been asking communities if, when communities have been — and I'm not sure if it was municipal government or how they get . . . the Sask Water component came into being — but Sask Water was offering to take over facilities like the lagoons and then lease them back, provide the service.

Or even the talk was providing the water treatment facility — they would own it, the community would rent or buy water from the facility.

And so, Mr. Minister, we've got a number of concerns here in that regard as to how one community is treated versus the other community, how one community is in regards to their facilities and they get . . . one community gets funding and the other community doesn't get any funding.

And, Mr. Minister, it would seem to me that what we're going to have to do as government is start thinking in the long term rather than ad hoc programs. Because the government changes on the national level or a government changes at the provincial level and we add and put in place a program and a format, one community may qualify, the other community doesn't qualify.

And I think the question needs to be asked, Mr. Minister, what the department is doing. When we look at this overall complex problem with regards to water project, water treatment, safe water, drinking water in our communities, what is the department doing to address this major concern?

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Mr. Chairman, first of all, I want to start . . . I've seen the Wawota plant, and if I may I'd like to really commend the leaders of that community for taking the initiative

and determining that, yes, they had to take the bull by the horns, if you wish, and proceed with a project based on the availability of funding that they had either through long-term debt, restructuring their finances, their financing, going to Municipal Financing Corporation, or dipping into their reserves. But they did take the initiative, recognizing that there was a need to ensure good quality water for their community — for their citizens and their community. They went ahead and did it. And it was prior to the multi-year program that's now been announced — the Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program.

And I very much respect, Mr. Chairman, what the member is suggesting and this . . . Yes, we need to have these long-term programs available that people, communities, that find themselves in difficulty can apply for and have available to them.

And what we've been asking the federal government, again, is to continue. That we perhaps either need more participation or very definitely longer participation by the federal government in order to address the concerns that the member has raised — that people do not get left out.

Unfortunately, and once again, nobody likes to meet with folks and say, well I'm sorry but because you spent your money and when you did it, it was prior to this program coming in place, we can't retroactively write you into the program. Otherwise there would be an insurmountable amount of communities that would be saying, what about us. So I know that's small consolation and I do recognize the concerns that the communities have.

And yes, like the community of Kipling — and I've seen that project as well — and they happened to apply for assistance when the program was in place for 2001-2002.

For those that had gone ahead and had expended the resources, the reserves, or borrowed money, I commend them. I still commend them for taking that initiative and recognizing and saying, hey look we better do something in the best interests of our community. And those leaders need to be commended.

Those are not easy decisions to make and I know it doesn't make you very popular when you need to . . . when you apply a program or you do something that you believe is for the betterment of your community, but ultimately it needs to be paid for and it's paid for through local taxation and utility bills and so on.

The one comment with respect to Sask Water, they will be there and are there to . . . And I know that we — the Wawota plant, as I say I saw that — and Sask Water has gone back and talked to them and talked about how they might be able to assist them in advancing the state-of-the-art facility that they have.

And perhaps looking at it from a regional perspective or in some way, shape, or form to alleviate in some way the costs that that community has incurred. Those are difficult to address as well. But I know that Sask Water has been very interested and visited that community to see if there was some way they could assist. And if it was by way, by means, of having to do some more construction or either buy something and lease it

back, we have to remember that it would be on a cost-recovery basis.

But I hope that answers the question. I know it's kind of global, but the most important thing is that those communities . . . and there have been others, there are other communities that did the same thing that Wawota did. And unfortunately, there is no retroactivity to any of these tripartite programs.

(16:45)

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, when we look at water, and certainly water is just one of the many concerns that we have at the municipal level, especially, Mr. Minister, since the government that you're now a part of, through the last number of years has actually reduced funding to municipalities.

And I think there was a period of time, Mr. Minister, when you were actually on this side of the House prepared to take the government on, on some of their funding policies when it came to municipalities because of how it affected the communities that you serve as well.

Well it's been an ongoing debate. And no doubt SARM has been there. SUMA has been there, Mr. Minister. And we've heard for the past number of years . . . and I would think the member for Moose Jaw North as well is quite well aware of the problems we have with water and with water treatment facilities. And he should be aware of this, Mr. Minister. In fact, he should have been, he should have been . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. Order. The member may want to start from about 30 seconds ago because that wasn't covered. I would ask hon. members to . . . Would the member for Moose Jaw North please come to order.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And just to go back to this for a minute, just acknowledging the fact that Moose Jaw, probably like residents all across this province, are concerned about water quality and water safety.

And we just — as my colleagues have indicated — we just want the minister and his department to know that it's not just municipal government, but it's Sask Water. And one of the problems that has arisen over the past number of years, as I indicated earlier, Mr. Chairman, is the fact that the government reduced funding to the municipal level for a good number of years resulting in municipalities — actually, as they're trying to grapple with the problems they have in providing quality water to their communities, as they try to grapple with an aging infrastructure and in sewage systems — of trying to understand and trying to come to a conclusion and an idea of how they could manage because of the off-load that this provincial government has actually placed on the back of the local taxpayer.

And I know the minister, when he gets an opportunity, is going to stand up and he's going to brag about the \$10 million increase in rural and municipal sharing. And while that increase is certainly welcome — and we did mention that the other day, it is certainly welcome — and I believe both Mr. Badham from SUMA, and Mr. Harrison, prior to Mr. Hardy taking over from

SARM, have indicated that that increase of \$10 million, it is welcome and they'll accept that.

They realize that through the past number of years the hands of government has been tied and we can argue all we want about the way provincial governments have handicapped and handcuffed local governments. The provincial government has argued that the federal government has offloaded their share of responsibility and they haven't funded our programs and we haven't had transfer payments where they were before, and as a result we've all had to make the sacrifice.

The unfortunate part, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister, is while we can blame the federal government, we can blame the provincial government, at the end of the day we can blame school boards, it comes down to the local ratepayer who ends up having to pay for those services.

And we look at the \$10 million increase this past spring, prior to the budget. And I believe the municipal governments — and I'm not sure if they went as one individual body, I just don't recall, but I believe individually anyway — they all made presentations to the cabinet, to your colleagues as they did to my colleagues, calling for at least a \$20 million increase just to get them back on some level footing realizing that that was just a portion of what they've lost over the past number of years and allowing them to start . . . begin to address the infrastructure . . . the problems that they're facing in their communities. Whether it's, as I indicated, whether it's water, whether it's sewage treatment facilities, whether it's the system that moves the sewage through our communities, or even street work in many of our communities.

And, Mr. Minister, what I see in, what I see in Regina — certainly where I've got an apartment rented right now, Mr. Minister — the number of potholes that are popping up even just driving on the streets of Regina, you would have to . . . I'm sure that Mayor Fiacco as he's sitting down with his council and trying to balance their budget and trying to look at, and trying to look at how, at how they're going to meet the needs of the services in addressing the potholes.

And I think I heard the member from Moose Jaw North again talking about, talking about vehicles. And I can appreciate the problems that the member from Moose Jaw North has driving in this city because I think we all face that fact. And that a lot of it, I think, comes back again to the provincial government's commitment to local government and commitment to looking at a long-term strategy and a long-term plan as to how we're going to meet the problems that we're facing on an ongoing basis, whether it's water quality, whether it's infrastructure involving lagoons, or whether it's, whether it's street upgrading and the like, Mr. Minister. The list goes on.

And that list doesn't just stop at urban government. It just doesn't stop in the . . . on the outskirts of Regina when people drive into Regina and they have, Mr. Chair . . . and drive on the streets of Regina, or driving into Saskatoon. I'm sure the city of Saskatoon is facing the same, the same problem as they look at their, at their city streets and their main thoroughfares.

And we're all talking about building Saskatchewan. We're talking about building a province, we're talking about building

a province that people want to come back to.

And, Mr. Chairman, just we all, we all had the privilege this afternoon of meeting with 25 individuals in this province that made our province proud — the Olympians, and a few Olympians that weren't able to join us this afternoon. We were talking about how proud we were of each of the abilities of these Olympians and the gold medals, the different medals, that were certainly brought to our province by these Olympians.

But the interesting thing, Mr. Chair, and Mr. Minister, is the fact that as I was talking to the Olympians — and maybe the government members found that out as well — many of these Olympians don't live in our province any more. And we ask ourselves why did they leave the province? And in some cases, they left the province because the training experience that was needed to achieve the goals and their aspirations just wasn't available in this province. But I talked to some of the Olympians who would love to, at some day, look at moving back to Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Chairman, and, Mr. Minister, I think if individuals of this nature even are going to consider moving back to Saskatchewan, we're going to have to build an infrastructure for . . . that would give them a reason why they should move back to Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately they had to drive down Albert Street in the city of Regina, and as soon as they got . . . started driving down Albert Street they thought, do I want to come back to Regina?

I'm not exactly sure that Mayor Fiacco would want to hear that. Mayor Fiacco would want them bragging about the city of Regina, as he's attempting to do right now, and telling people why we need to look at Regina as a place to come to, as a place to invest in — or the mayor of Saskatoon or even the town of Kipling.

And, Mr. Minister, one of the conversations we had earlier this afternoon when we were having the tea was the veterinary clinic in the community of Kipling. We talk about building communities. And, Mr. Minister, you made the comment about, I believe it was somebody from the federal level, who almost mocked the community and the veterinary clinic in Kipling for the fact that they would build this nice, new facility to serve their community; as if, here's a small town, why would you invest in a small town like Kipling? Well why not? Why wouldn't we do that?

And one of the reasons for the water treatment facility in Kipling, Mr. Minister, is the council of the community of Kipling, they're looking at their community — they want people to come to their community. And that's why they got on the bandwagon and they began to look seriously at the problems they were having with their water treatment facility. They realized, Mr. Minister, that they needed to upgrade that facility and to . . . in order to encourage people to look at Kipling as a community to invest in.

And, Mr. Speaker, you will agree with me that that veterinary clinic was an . . . is an excellent facility. And what the veterinary clinic has done and what the community has done by building this new veterinary clinic is they've given Dr. Smyth

just a terrific facility and a clinic that all the residents of the area of Kipling and surrounding area — and I believe we're looking at about a 50-mile radius at least that that community serves — and we're providing . . . an excellent service is being provided to the community as a result of the veterinary clinic.

And that's just one of the numerous expansions that have taken place and that are coming as a result of town council realizing that water treatment facilities and the quality of water in their community is a real asset when you look at trying to lure people back to your community or, Mr. Chairman, to our province. And we have to find ways in which we can build our province.

And that's why, Mr. Minister, I think your department, and I believe your department like all government departments, needs to look beyond the box a lot of times. We need to start looking in a broad perspective. And we need to start building and looking to the future as to how we can address a number of these issues over the long term rather than . . . And I say this as a politician to a politician — for too long we have looked at services, we have looked at problems on the basis of, Mr. Minister, what we can do to get elected. And unfortunately that doesn't necessarily meet the needs of our local communities.

Local communities need to know that even if governments are defeated, that the services they are providing and the funding for those services are going to be there. And it doesn't . . . because a government is defeated that they are going to lose out on that funding.

And, Mr. Chairman, that's why it's important that we actually, Mr. Chairman, we do take the time to plan for the future. And I know when I'm talking about intergovernment relations and intergovernmental affairs, and we talk about municipal government and revenue sharing, Mr. Chairman, I think you'll agree with me this covers a wide area. There are a lot of questions to be asked and I know the . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. It now being 5 o'clock this committee will stand recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.