

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens very concerned about the condition of Highway 47 south of Estevan. And 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 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Estevan, Lampman, Arcola, and my hometown of Macoun.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here dealing with 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Davidson and Bladworth.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly again today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the crop insurance increases. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Leoville, Medstead, and Spiritwood.

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 nos. 13, 18, and 19.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Environment minister: what was the total cost for forest fire fighting in the calendar year 2002 in Saskatchewan; further to that, what were the total number of forest fire fighting subcontractor contracts given out in the year 2002; and as well what was the value of each of those contracts and to whom were they awarded?

I also have the same question for 2001 and 2000.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following questions:

To the Minister of Agriculture: what are the terms of reference for the Crown land lease review proposed and now being undertaken by the Department of Agriculture; which departments are involved in this review and what are their respective responsibilities; will the public have an opportunity to have input into this review; what is the anticipated end date of this review; and will there be a final public report upon the completion of the review?

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health, regarding gambling addictions treatment: why is the new gambling addictions treatment program of Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region a cost to the health budget as opposed to being taken from the profits of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of guests today.

In the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, there's a large group of students, 18, from Holy Rosary Community School and I'll be meeting with them for photos a little bit later. They're with their teacher, Barb Papandreou.

And I would just say that I don't see any chaperones here — they're laughing; I said her name wrong I'm sure, so we'll have to fix that up after — but no chaperones. You're very brave coming out with 18 people all on your own there. But we will see the students later.

Would everybody in the House join me in welcoming them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, we have one of our public servant tours. And as you know they do an in-depth tour of the Legislative Building, they tour the Legislative Library, the Clerk's office, Executive

Council, they're here to observe House proceedings, and as well they'll be meeting with members from both sides of the legislature.

And in this tour today we have employees from the following departments: Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization; Public Service Commission; Health; Industry and Resources; Environment; Community Resources and Employment; Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Labour; and Justice.

Please join me in thanking and welcoming our public servants here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to join with the minister in welcoming our public service employees to the building today to observe the proceedings of the . . . on the floor of the Assembly, and to gain an understanding of what happens in here with pieces of legislation and questions that you have already seen members asking — written questions — what we do with them, Mr. Speaker. I know that that's one of the areas that the members of the public service are interested in.

So I'd like to ask everyone to again welcome them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, a number of guests that we have this afternoon here to watch the afternoon's proceedings.

Sitting in your west gallery and also in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, members of the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters. Mr. Speaker, we have met many of these professionals over the years at their annual firefighters lobby and I'm very pleased to have them here again today.

I would ask that a number of them — I can't introduce all of them, Mr. Speaker — but I would ask a number of the main representatives to stand as they're introduced. Mr. Gerry Huget from the . . . president of the local here in Regina and also president of the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters. Bill Howes, who is here from Moose Jaw; Bruce Seimans from Saskatoon; Greg Litvanyi from Yorkton; Wade Sutherland from Swift Current; Clint Bullerwell from North Battleford; Doug Reynolds from Prince Albert; and Harold Whiteoak from Weyburn.

Along with these gentleman I would like to add a welcome to all of you for taking the time to be here on this very important afternoon. And I would encourage all members of the House to please help me in welcoming our professional firefighters from Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Minister of Labour in welcoming the

number of firefighters that are here in the gallery today. A number of the faces are very familiar to me, whether it's through the firefighter lobby that's gone on over the last three years that I have been a member or some personal friends that I see up in the crowd too.

So I'd like all members to join with me and the Minister of Labour in once again welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour for me to join with other members in welcoming the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters to this Assembly and to take this opportunity to thank them in their work lives for daily being prepared to put their own lives at risk in working for the safety and security of the community. And if I may, a personal word of welcome to Clint Bullerwell of North Battleford. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and to members of this Legislative Assembly, people who are here for the Western Transportation Advisory Council, WESTAC. We've been meeting for the last couple of days and they're seated in your gallery, in the back row. And I would ask them to stand as I introduce them, please.

On the far side, Charray Dutka from the Canadian Wheat Board. And next to Charray is His Worship Jon Kingsbury from Coquitlam. Jon was born in Rosetown and he lives in the sixth largest city in BC (British Columbia). He was raised on a family farm about four miles from Carievale. So welcome to . . . a return for you, Jon.

Also seated next to Jon is Ron Liberty. Ron is with the Brotherhood of Maintenance Way Employees. And next to Ron is Dick Corfe. Dick comes the furthest distance — he's with the St. Lawrence Seaway Corporation, president and chief executive officer from Niagara, and the office is in Cornwall.

Next to Dick is David MacMartin with CP (Canadian Pacific) Railway corporation. And then next to David we have Lisa Baratta. Lisa is on staff with WESTAC and doing a tremendous job there. Next to her is Lorne Nukina and Lorne has done a tremendous job taking pictures and helping in . . . host the event for WESTAC. And next to Lorne is Ruth Sol, the vice-president of WESTAC, who celebrates 20 years with the organization. She's done a tremendous job over those 20 years and continues to do so as vice-president.

So I would ask all to join me in welcoming them here, please.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Elhard: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I too would like to welcome the members of the transportation industry that are in the gallery today. Transportation is very important to the Prairie provinces as a whole, and we appreciate any effort that is undertaken to expedite the successful development of an efficient transportation system.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Workers' Compensation Protection for Firefighters

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to inform this Assembly that today this government will be introducing legislation expanding workers' compensation protection for Saskatchewan's almost 700 full-time professional firefighters. Mr. Speaker, we have the utmost regard for the critical services provided daily by firefighters to save lives and protect our community.

The amendments that we are introducing today ensure that The Workers' Compensation Act adequately addresses the link between specific occupational diseases and the occupation of firefighting.

And, Mr. Speaker, today we will also be introducing amendments to The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act that will establish two new provincial honours. One of these will be a Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal. The Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal will recognize exemplary service of 25 years in Saskatchewan for law enforcement personnel and those working in direct capacity to protect the people of Saskatchewan. This, of course, Mr. Speaker, includes firefighters.

Mr. Speaker, I was privileged to participate in a firefighter ride along in Saskatoon recently, one of the most educational and exhilarating events as an MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly).

Mr. Speaker, certain occupations contain certain risks. The amendments we will be proposing today will help protect and to honour those brave men and women who choose to take those risks for the benefit of us all. Thanks to all the firefighters who worked so hard to make this day a reality. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

University of Saskatchewan Huskie Salute Awards Banquet

Ms. Julé: — Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the University of Saskatchewan's Huskie Salute Awards banquet in Saskatoon. These awards recognize the achievements of the students, faculty, and staff involved in Huskie athletics.

Although it did not receive an official award, the Huskie women's track team and Canadian champions received a standing ovation. Two members of that team, Jamie Epp and Kelsie Hendry, were named male and female Athlete of the Year, respectively.

This year's Coach of the Year is Brian Towriss, who led the football Huskies to the Vanier Cup.

Basketball player, Ashley Dutchak, and hockey player, Dean Beuker are the female and male Rookies of the Year.

The Top All Round Huskie awards — awards which recognize athletics, academics, and sportsmanship — went to Misty Bertram of the women's hockey team, and wrestler, Mickey Jutras.

Another noteworthy award presented on Saturday was to Shannon Kekula-Kristiansen. Ms. Kekula-Kristiansen was inducted into the Athletic Wall of Fame for her outstanding five-year shot put career in the mid-'80s that resulted in Canada West gold twice, CIS (Canadian Interuniversity Sport) gold three times, and numerous records at both championship levels.

I would invite all members of the Assembly to join with me in congratulating this year's Huskie Salute Awards recipients.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

International Special Librarians Day

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it is time to take just a moment of one day to pay tribute to the people who, year in and year out, help us manage the flood of information which flows over us. I am talking of course of chief librarian, Marian Powell, and her extraordinary staff at our beautiful and special Legislative Library. A special library, I remind members, is one that caters to the special needs of a particular discipline.

The theme for this year's International Special Librarians Day is quote, "Orchestrating a World of Information" and this theme aptly describes what they do — direct and manage a changing world of information for the benefit of their clients. They orchestrate this constantly changing flux of information with the skill, the élan, and the grace of a classical composer.

And, Mr. Speaker, not only do they manage the flood of paper which is the traditional medium of the librarian, they are intrepid interpreters of the Internet — that beast which still terrifies many of us. It has been truly said that without some skilful guidance, going on the Web to get information is like trying to drink water from a fire hose. Whether it's a government document, an obscure quotation from an even more obscure Winthrop Macworth Praed, or some warm statistic from www.whatever, the Legislative Library crew can find it for us. And they do it time after time, for which we are perpetually in their debt.

I know all members will join with me in thanking them on this, their special day.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Larry Janzen Obituary

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to pay tribute to Larry Janzen. Larry died Saturday, April 5 at age 55. He is survived by his loving wife Doreen, daughter Wendy, and son Paul.

After his U of S (University of Saskatchewan) education, Larry moved to Regina where he started his teaching career at Thom

Collegiate. Shortly after that he moved to Saskatoon so he could be closer to Rosthern. He started teaching mathematics at Evan Hardy Collegiate in Saskatoon and also worked on the farm on weekends and during the summer.

Coaching was a huge part of Larry's life. He was the head wrestling coach and assistant football coach at both Thom and Evan Hardy. He also coached the Rosthern Wheat Kings for three seasons, the first of those to the provincial finals.

Larry dreamt big. In 1981 Larry finally was able to fulfill his dream of becoming a full-time seed grower. In '85 he built a seed-cleaning plant under the company Spruce Grove Seeds. He was awarded the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers Association Pulse Promoter of the Year for the year 2002.

Generosity and community services were core values. A major undertaking was the voluntary work when he worked with the Seager Wheeler Farm and was the Chair of that society from its inception to 2002. He was also very involved in the Canadian food banks. Over the years he served as youth leader, Sunday school teacher, church choir, worship leader. He was a true Saskatchewan builder and we will miss him dearly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Regina Housing Starts Double

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Well, well, well, Mr. Speaker — more good news for Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, all the gloom-and-doom predictions of the Sask Party have not been enough to prevent this province's economy from being on a roll. Here's the latest in a long string of good news stories for Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, housing construction in Regina is off to a strong start this year. A strong start? Mr. Speaker, the housing starts are double what they were last year. A spokesperson for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp commented, and I quote:

It looks like we're going to blow our forecast right out of the water.

CMHC's (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation) 2003 forecast called for Regina to post a similar number of starts this year as last.

And, Mr. Speaker, Saskatoon has had exactly the same number of housing starts in the first quarter of 2003 as Regina. And outside the two major cities in that same period, Mr. Speaker, new housing starts increased from five in 2002 to fifty-four in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, this government has a vision and a plan for this province and clearly that plan is working. When the CMHC spokesperson was asked why the turnaround in housing starts, he replied, and I quote:

... the most important thing is that we are seeing steady increases in employment. When we have increased the number of jobs, that means we also see increases in income and that encourages in-migration.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Swift Current Youth Achievements

Mr. Wall: — In Swift Current, as it is across the province, our greatest asset is our youth. And today I'd like to recognize the accomplishments of several young people from my hometown of Swift Current.

Local hockey teams in Swift Current won four provincial titles this past hockey season. The latest team to cruise to victory was the Swift Current PeeWee A Tier 2 Mustangs. The Mustangs recently defeated Meadow Lake to capture the provincial title. The Mustangs joined the Bantam AA Raiders, the Midget Wild, and the Bantam Eliminators/Broncos as the other Swift Current teams to claim provincial championships this season.

Congratulations to these teams on another successful campaign.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to pass on congratulations to the winners of the regional science fair held in Swift Current this week. First place went to Christopher Hueser of Swift Current, second place went to Jenna Corcoran of Meyronne, and third place was Amanda Lee of Swift Current, while fourth place went to Hilary Judiesch of Swift Current as well.

These four outstanding individuals will take their expertise in the field of science to the National Science Fair to be held in Calgary in May.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all the members of the Assembly to recognize the achievements of these young people from Swift Current and to wish them well in their future endeavours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Aboriginal Achievement Awards

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards were held at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa last week.

Mr. Speaker, these awards were established to help build pride and self esteem for the Aboriginal community, provide role models for Aboriginal youth, and to inform the larger community of the accomplishments of individuals who have set high standards for themselves and have had the discipline, drive, and determination to attain their goals. It is the highest honour the Aboriginal community bestows upon its members.

Mr. Speaker, Unooch nitugageneeten.

I am happy and proud to say that three of this year's 14 recipients are from Saskatchewan. They are: Métis fiddler John Arcand, recognized for helping that important aspect of Métis culture; engineer and commercial builder, Gary Bosgoed, who received his award for his work in the areas of telecommunications, housing, and energy projects for First Nations communities; and University of Saskatchewan engineering student, Matthew Dunn, who was this year's youth recipient for the numerous scholarships and awards he has

received and for the example he's set as a student, athlete, performer, and community volunteer.

I ask all the Assembly to join me in congratulating Mr. Arcand, Mr. Bosgoed, Mr. Dunn on their successes, on their being chosen as recipients of the National Aboriginal Achievement Awards.

Kinunaskomananuk — Mr. Speaker, we thank them.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mega Bingo

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I have a few more questions for the minister of Liquor and Gaming. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the minister said:

The minister responsible for (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming) . . . did not approve an upfront expenditure for this program (the mega bingo program) because initially there was no net budget impact . . . projected . . .

That's an incredible statement, Mr. Speaker. Even if there was no budget impact anticipated, there was still \$6 million at risk without ministerial approval.

Mr. Speaker, is the minister saying that Liquor and Gaming is free to assume any amount of risk they want so long as they tell the minister there is no net budget impact?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act gives the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority the statutory authority to operate and regulate liquor and gaming activities in this province, Mr. Speaker.

In 1997 the cabinet approved a gaming strategy, Mr. Speaker, that included linked bingo as an initiative that could help rebalance the revenues and assist the charities across this province that rely on bingos, Mr. Speaker.

SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) proceeded with the development and implementation of a linked bingo game, Mr. Speaker, throughout the province, as identified in the gaming strategy approved by cabinet. Linked bingo was initially projected to be cost neutral to government. The game was expected to pay for itself, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Again the minister said the concept was approved. The question we continue to ask on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan: was the expenditure, the \$6.2 million expenditure, approved to achieve this concept and who gave this approval?

Or, Mr. Speaker, was the money to be spent on this project of no interest to the NDP? After all, it was only \$6.2 million, small

change compared to the \$28 million lost in SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), the \$107 million spent on land titles, and millions of dollars more that the NDP have lost in failed ventures.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: did the NDP decide this bingo scheme was going ahead no matter what the cost and no matter what the outcome?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — I mentioned that linked bingo, based on what was happening in other places — okay — was expected to be revenue neutral, Mr. Speaker, no cost to government. It was expected to pay for its own operations.

SLGA, under its statutory authority, went ahead to implement by contracting an agent, the WCLC (Western Canada Lottery Corporation), which those people continue to try to discredit, Mr. Speaker — we have confidence in. When those costs within the budget that were not previously incorporated, because we did not know what the implementations cost would be, when they were incorporated into a budget, an SLGA budget, Mr. Speaker, the minister responsible for SLGA decided on that basis to cancel linked bingo in June 2001.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, to the minister, was there any type of spending control on what Liquor and Gaming could spend on mega bingo? The minister seems to be telling us there wasn't. SLGA seems to have a blank cheque to gamble whatever they want on mega bingo without a business plan, without a budget, and without cabinet approval. Isn't that what the minister has been telling us for the last four days?

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us and the people of Saskatchewan what parameters did the minister have in place to control how much Liquor and Gaming could spend on mega bingo? Did they have a ceiling on what could be spent on mega bingo?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, the bingo industry and charities who rely on bingo came to government and said you know, there are linked bingos, megaprojects, in other provinces that will assist us in increasing our participation by players and increasing the revenues we so desperately need.

Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate. Any public loss of funds is unfortunate. But SLGA, Mr. Speaker, is in fact . . . And the people of this province recognize how successful the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority is in regulating those issues that contribute . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I would ask the students not to participate in the applause, please. I would ask that only one debate take place across the floor at a time as well so we can hear the responses.

The minister has 10 seconds to continue.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority contributes — contributes on the basis of their good management practices at that authority, that I have confidence in — more than 300 million, more than \$300 million each year for community projects.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is admitting that there were no spending controls in place. I guess we should consider ourselves lucky that they only lost \$6 million. They could have lost 10 million. Maybe they could have lost \$20 million. We should be grateful to the NDP (New Democratic Party) bingo barons because they only lost \$6 million.

Mr. Speaker, this is appalling. The minister is admitting the only spending controls that were put in place was after the money was lost. In other words, the member for Regina Wascana Plains just sat back and waited for the jackpot to grow to \$6.2 million before she yelled bingo and shut it down. The problem is she didn't win \$6.2 million, Mr. Speaker. She lost 6.2 million taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: how could the NDP allow Liquor and Gaming to lose \$6.2 million without any spending controls?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's evident why the people of this province will have no confidence in those members opposite in governing or directing any business ventures, Mr. Speaker. And obviously, none of them have ever participated in any type of business ventures.

SLGA, who we are very confident in, the contributions they make to this province, over \$300 million, Mr. Speaker — you know where that goes? To community projects, for the hospitality industry, for government programs including health care, education, and highways, and in the case of bingo, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of charity groups throughout this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ethanol Industry

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation. It's been six months today, Mr. Speaker, since the NDP and Broe industries officially announced plans to build an 80-million litre ethanol plant at Belle Plaine under the corporate name Prairie Sun Energy.

Mr. Speaker, the Prairie Sun Energy offices in Regina are still vacant and there's no activity at the site of Belle Plaine. Will the minister explain what the status is of the Belle Plaine ethanol project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well unless the opposition has changed their position, this is finally one issue where they've actually stated their position and have so far stuck to it, that is that they are supportive of the ethanol industry, Mr. Speaker. The only difference is, Mr. Speaker, that that party over there, Mr. Speaker, is not interested in partnering with communities, unlike our government and our party here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the ethanol industry will be a strong industry here in Saskatchewan, this year and years into the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, both the Minister of Agriculture . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. I recognize the . . . Order, please.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this year, both the Minister of Agriculture and the minister responsible for the Crown Investments Corporation indicated that Broe did not yet have its financing in place for their 60 per cent of the ethanol deal. In late February the minister responsible for CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) told the media that he would be worried if Broe did not have its financing in place by the end of March.

It's now mid-April, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister confirm whether or not Broe has secured financing for its share of the ethanol deal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, the members opposite tend to twist the words of what the members on this side say, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I said accurately that I . . . if there was concerns that I would have . . . I would have concerns, Mr. Speaker, if the financing package was not progressing, is what I said, Mr. Speaker. The financing package is progressing, I am advised, very well, Mr. Speaker. We are confident in the ethanol industry. It's moving ahead exactly as was scheduled.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, in December the former NDP Industry minister told the media, and I quote:

I would suggest if Pat Broe can't get his equity portion from a bank, the deals won't proceed.

Mr. Speaker, if the minister is now saying that Broe has secured their equity financing or will likely secure equity financing in the near future, will he assure Saskatchewan taxpayers that the NDP government did not and will not help Broe with its financing through the public treasury?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well this is an

interesting attack from that member who would benefit in his own riding, Mr. Speaker. This ethanol plant in that member's riding . . . this is really interesting, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the package is moving ahead, the financing is being negotiated. Everything is on schedule, Mr. Speaker. We . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I said, Mr. Speaker, that everything is moving ahead as scheduled, financing continues to be negotiated, there has been a draft terms sheet agreed to, Mr. Speaker. Everything is moving exactly as was anticipated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, when the Belle Plaine project was launched six months ago to this day, the minister stated that the government was in negotiations with Broe to build two other ethanol plants in Saskatchewan — one near Tisdale and one in the Yorkton-Melville area — and that these plants would be announced early in 2003.

Mr. Speaker, what is the status of these negotiations and are these other two plants still going to be built by Broe industries and the NDP government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Here's another interesting contradiction. That member would suggest in that question that people should just start dumping money into it without any due diligence taking place here, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, not only in Belle Plaine do we work with Broe industries, but in those communities that that member had identified, we work with the communities, Mr. Speaker. We will not come forward with a project until all of the appropriate work has been done, unless that member is now suggesting that people should just dump money in before due diligence and the proper work has been done to assess the projects.

The project in Belle Plaine, as I said earlier, is moving exactly as we would have anticipated.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for North Battleford Sewer and Water Infrastructure

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Government Relations. One year ago, Justice Robert Laing tabled a series of recommendations as a result of the North Battleford Water Inquiry. Recommendation no. 2 was that the city needed to begin construction of a new sewage treatment plant at a location downstream from the surface water treatment plant no later than this spring.

At the time, the NDP said it concurred with Justice Laing's report and this recommendation. Yet after two attempts to secure \$2 million from the Canadian-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program to assist with this project, the city has been rejected.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP government, who has input in the approval of these projects, reject the city of North Battleford's request?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again the members opposite in asking their questions do not . . . are not giving all of the facts about who is involved in reviewing the projects.

Mr. Speaker, \$1.7 million in federal and provincial CSIP (Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program) funding will be provided to the city of North Battleford to support their water and sewer needs. North Battleford has been supported in a significant way by the province in their efforts to upgrade their sewer and water system. The city has access to the 1.2 million over the five years of the CSIP program; a quarter of a million dollars, \$254,000 has already been allotted . . . allocated to two new water supply wells, Mr. Speaker. And there's more.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of the Environment said that the infrastructure program's project review committee, of which the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association is a part, made the decision to reject North Battleford's application, but that's not the case. North Battleford applied to CSIP as a strategic initiative and the Department of Government Relations and specifically the minister can sign off on these projects and recommend they move forward.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP government blaming the project review committee when they themselves and their own Minister of Government Relations rejected the city of North Battleford's funding request?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — You talk about misconstruing facts, Mr. Speaker. North Battleford applied for \$3.2 million in additional funds under the strategic initiatives portion of the fund in 2003-2004.

However, that CSIP Project Review Committee which includes — and I wish the members would be upfront and give all the facts — which includes representatives from SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), from SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), federal and provincial governments, who did not recommend the application because supported it . . . supporting it would have depleted the amount available to fund other projects.

The CSIP Management Committee, which consists of representatives from the federal and provincial governments, agreed, and declined the project, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to read from the Canadian-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program, federal-provincial projects strategic initiative. And I'd like to

quote:

To allow for projects of a regional nature, possibly involving more than one municipality, the federal and provincial governments may also nominate projects, to a maximum value of 20 per cent of the total value of all approved projects.

Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately this government did not nominate North Battleford for that.

Mr. Speaker, hundreds of people got sick as a result of drinking tainted water in North Battleford. And the fact that the city's sewage treatment plant is upstream from the water intake to the water treatment plant was identified as a major cause of the water problem. Mr. Speaker, the city of North Battleford has been working to try to rectify the problems. But two years in a row they've been rejected by this NDP government for funding under CSIP to build a new sewage treatment plant downstream from the water source.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government keeps coming down hard on communities across this province about substandard water supplies yet is failing to live up to its role and responsibilities in helping provide safe water infrastructure in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP neglecting its responsibility?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if \$949,000, what has been committed to North Battleford . . . that's been approved, Mr. Speaker, to support the design of a new sewage system plant. Now that funding will be used over the next two years. The city has been aware that it will receive this funding — for some time they've been aware of that — and that these funds will be part of an upcoming CSIP announcement, Mr. Speaker, and other projects that have been approved for the next several years.

In addition, this is a point of interest that perhaps people should be aware of. North Battleford has been provided \$500,000, a half a million dollars, from the strategic initiatives portion of CSIP, of that fund, to install an ultraviolet system in its water treatment plant. Including that strategic funding, Mr. Speaker, North Battleford will get about \$121 per capita from CSIP for its sewer and water and infrastructure, about 40 per cent more than any other city will receive on a per capita basis.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP have got their priorities all wrong when the people of North Battleford, and people in communities like Maple Creek, and Perdue, and Maryfield, and Vonda, have raised their money and are paying more to the municipality for water and waste water projects, and this government neglects their own responsibility for safe water infrastructure.

The NDP have \$28 million to lose on potatoes; they can gamble \$40 million on the Australian stock market; they have \$6 million to throw away on a hare-brained bingo scheme. You can't come up with \$2 million for the city of North Battleford to

ensure safe drinking water.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why \$6 million in bingo doesn't need to be budgeted for, doesn't need to be approved by a minister, yet this government can so easily reject North Battleford's sewage plant project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the allegation that this minister or this government has any say as far as what the project review committee and management committee recommends — reviews and recommends and approves — is totally, totally unfair, unjust. That's not a proper allegation.

North Battleford's application is reviewed by representatives from SUMA, SARM, and federal and provincial governments. They did not recommend the application because supporting it would have depleted funds that perhaps might have been used for the projects in those communities that member talks about. And there's been numerous communities throughout the province that have been supported by this coalition government.

North Battleford does have other options, Mr. Speaker, for funding the remainder of the project. Based on their excellent financial health, there should be no problem, no problem in arranging financing to upgrade the sewage treatment facility. That city's reserves are approximately \$13.2 million, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. I was very pleased to note that this morning the Premier was on CKRM and he said, and I quote, that he was:

. . . ready to sit down with the mayor of North Battleford to discuss further assistance to the city in order that construction of the new sewage treatment plant could proceed immediately.

I want to congratulate the Premier for that statement, and for following through on his promise of two years ago that he would be there for North Battleford.

So my question for the Premier is: has he contacted the mayor of North Battleford and when will this meeting take place?

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in fact we have been making effort to be in contact with the mayor of North Battleford. I'm not sure as I speak if we have, if we have been able to do that. But we were making that effort this morning, Mr. Speaker.

This government has stood with North Battleford throughout this situation. It was this government, it was this government . . . If I may say, Mr. Speaker, with the opposition from the North Battleford member, it was this government that established a commission to investigate the circumstance that brought about the drinking water situation in North Battleford.

It was this government that did that.

It is this government that has followed through on the recommendations of that commission. It is this government that is working with communities across Saskatchewan to ensure the best quality drinking water that we can provide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear the Premier's response. But if he's having trouble getting through to the mayor I suggest he try 445-1700.

He's absolutely correct though that the \$2 million that the province has been asked to contribute to the \$15 million sewage treatment plant is the same figure that the inquiry cost. And he's correct that I said that if North Battleford had the choice between 2 million bucks on an inquiry and \$111,000 on a quote "expert" who never once visited the city of North Battleford, never once picked up the phone to talk to anybody in North Battleford, that we would have preferred the \$2 million be spent on the sewage treatment plant.

The Premier told us two years ago he would be there for us. If he is having trouble setting up a meeting with the Premier, I now want to offer to him my services in setting up a meeting. And I want to suggest that in view of the minister's known opposition when he . . . (inaudible) . . . for North Battleford that the Premier come alone to meet with our mayor, and I will assist in that meeting.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — It's pretty clear to members of this House, Mr. Speaker, that the last thing the city of North Battleford is any more the service of that member.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That is pretty clear. The member who absolutely resisted . . .

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition now from his bench says, call an election. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition from his bench says, call an election, he says.

Mr. Speaker, I know why he wants me to call an election. I know why he wants me to call an election. Because he sees the Conservative Party of Saskatchewan coming on strong. He sees the trouble that he's got in his own caucus. He sees people across the province saying all they can do is sit in their benches and be negative. They haven't had one positive suggestion since we opened this legislature. They're looking at the polling, they're telling me to call an election. And I know the member from North Battleford, he doesn't want an election very badly, I'll tell you that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 18 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 18, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read for the first time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and, by leave of the Assembly, ordered to be read a second time later this day.

Bill No. 19 — The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 19, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Amendment Act, 2003 now be introduced and read for the first time.

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

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 am extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government and table written responses to questions no. 55 to 59 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to 55, 56, 57, 58, and 59 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 18 — The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003 and will formally move second reading of the legislation at the end of my remarks.

This afternoon I'd like to take a few minutes of the Assembly's time to outline the background for this legislation, detail part of what it does, and to explain how it benefits Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters Association has lobbied for many years to have certain occupational diseases specifically recognized as compensable under The Workers' Compensation Act.

Mr. Speaker, on May 23, 2002 the Manitoba government passed legislation that recognizes the link between exposure to the hazards faced by full-time firefighters and five forms of cancer. Manitoba undertook a review of the current literature to identify occupational diseases associated with firefighting. Following that review, legislative amendments were passed that presumed certain forms of cancer are an occupational disease and therefore compensable unless evidence to the contrary is

shown. Manitoba also enacted regulations that set out the minimum employment periods for each form of cancer.

Mr. Speaker, some provinces have passed legislation in this area and others are currently reviewing existing research. In our March Throne Speech, this government announced our intention to amend The Workers' Compensation Act during this legislative session to include recognition of certain diseases associated with the profession of firefighting as compensable.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that it's time to take this action on behalf of our firefighters. The legislative action we are taking with this Bill is quite straightforward. I'm confident that all hon. members will be anxious to support it. This Act establishes a rebuttable presumption that five forms of cancer are occupational diseases for workers employed as firefighters. A rebuttable presumption assumes that a firefighter with one of the forms of cancer listed in the legislation acquires the cancer as a result of his or her work as a firefighter unless there is evidence to show contrary.

The five forms of cancer are primary site brain cancer, primary site bladder cancer, primary site kidney cancer, primary non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, and primary leukemia. The scientific evidence indicates that firefighters are twice as likely as the general population to contract these cancers. Regulations that establish minimum employment requirements based on existing scientific evidence will be enacted. As new information becomes available on these cancers and the latency periods involved, the regulations can be readily changed to keep abreast of new scientific evidence.

Mr. Speaker, our most recent WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) committee of review considered a submission by the Saskatchewan Professional Firefighters Association but did not recommend a legislative amendment. At the time it made its decision, the committee did not have access to the medical studies that established a correlation between the five forms of cancer mentioned and the profession of firefighting.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen the medical studies and we are persuaded Saskatchewan firefighters are correct in saying that these cancers should be recognized as compensable occupational illnesses. There are two ways to accomplish this objective: by legislation, or by WCB policy. While a board policy could have been drafted establishing the rebuttable presumption, we believe that, given the significance of this issue, this presumption on behalf of firefighters should be enshrined in legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The WCB has stated there will be no incremental cost attributable to this legislation because claims for occupational diseases are being accepted under the existing legislation and policies.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment is the right thing to do because it recognizes these cancers are compensable under the Act for our professional firefighters, men and women who experience exposure to toxins and carcinogens as part of their daily duties. It will affect all full-time professional firefighters in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I should also point out that this legislation does not prevent volunteer and forest firefighters from filing claims. Such claims will continue to be adjusted on a case-by-case basis.

Our Workers' Compensation system protects employers and workers against the results of workplace injuries and disease. It has brought stability to Saskatchewan workplaces for over 70 years by providing coverage at a competitive cost, and protecting workers and employees against the risks and uncertainties of injuries and litigation and costly court battles.

This government and the Workers' Compensation Board are committed to ensuring the provision of the most accountable and responsive compensation system possible. We have the utmost regard for the critical services provided daily by firefighters to save lives and protect our communities. And we believe that these amendments ensure that The Workers' Compensation Act adequately addresses the link between these specific occupational diseases and the occupation of firefighting.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the amendments to The Workers' Compensation Act we are proposing is both meritorious and straightforward. There are very good reasons indeed for passing this legislation and I invite all hon. members to support it.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 18, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2003.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is really an honour and a privilege on behalf of the official opposition to speak to Bill 18, The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act.

I want to of course welcome all the firefighters to the legislature today for what I know is a very important day and a long-awaited day through many years of lobbying that the professional firefighters have done. In the three and a half to four years that I have been a member, it's always an annual event to see the professional firefighters come in and talk to our caucus and give us a heads-up on the issues that are important to them.

I think no member in this House can put into words the gratitude that we all feel towards firefighters who, day and night, actually save the lives of our citizens of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — I think after the 9/11 attack on New York City and Washington, DC (District of Columbia), the role of firefighters was brought even closer to the public's consciousness. The act of heroism saw that day were truly remarkable.

I think there are the same acts of heroism brought out every day in this province that aren't on the cameras and not televised to the rest of the nation, but certainly the invaluable work that they do throughout our province can never be thanked enough.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit about process today and how Bills go through the House. And I think it is important to go through, with the visitors in the Chamber today, to understand exactly the procedure which in . . . as far as the Bills are concerned, and how they proceed through the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think we saw an example with the Minister of Youth, Culture and Recreation who introduced a Bill today and then the Bill will be seen by members on our side, read for the first time, and then debated on and spoke to into the future. It was a real rarity for this House to consider leave and to grant leave for a Bill to move from first reading to second reading on the same day.

And the very reason for that is, Mr. Speaker, we did not receive a copy of Bill No. 18 until right when the minister was speaking, Mr. Speaker. And that is very unusual. I can only think of a few times in the four or five . . . three or four years that I have been here that that has been the case. It has been the case when after a by-election; it was the case a couple of days ago with interim supply.

But a Bill of this magnitude, a Bill that has been lobbied by the professional firefighters to the government to put into place, it is very unusual for a Bill to proceed past first reading and into second reading on the same date.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the government hadn't introduced this Bill yesterday or the week before or the week before that. We've had two and a half weeks to have a look at this Bill and have sent it out and proceed on through. Unfortunately whether it was a mistake or an oversight that they didn't introduce a Bill prior to the visitation by the professional firefighters, Mr. Speaker, it may have been an oversight and that was the very reason that leave was had to have been granted.

And I think it's extremely important that people in the House today realize how rare that is.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill itself, as I mentioned before, as dealing with The Workers' Compensation Act and the whole issue has been brought to our attention before through the firefighters' lobby. And, Mr. Speaker, there's certainly a need for this piece of legislation.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the legislation, until we have a chance to send it out because there are many interested parties, not only the people that are here in the House today but there are many other people that would be interested in such a change in this legislation because, Mr. Speaker, there may be some costs involved. And not that that is as important as the proper thing to do. I notice in the minister's speech she was talking about it's the right thing to do and we would believe that, but there's also some costs that need to be investigated.

And until we can go through that proper process, a responsible process of any opposition, it would be the responsible process to go through for an opposition to take this Bill, at least be able to read it more than once through the minister's speeches — the only time that I've had a chance to look at it. It would be irresponsible for us to proceed any faster than to have this Bill

put out to the general public to be looked at and to be studied through the proper channels, Mr. Speaker.

The whole issue of the concern with cancer and the five different groups of cancer that the minister had spoke of is certainly not to be taken lightly. I think it's very important that this piece of legislation . . . we know how hard it was for this government to introduce. It's been three years that I know of that they have been lobbied — actually since about 1991 was when the first was brought to Workers' Compensation Board — this very issue.

It would be very irresponsible to see this piece of legislation be passed without it being properly . . . and made sure that there's nothing . . . properly scrutinized and make sure that there are no omissions. I think it would be . . . If it's taken three years that I've been in here for this government to move in this direction, I could imagine how long it would take for the government to admit that they had done something wrong and omitted something in this piece of legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, until we have the opportunity to review this Bill, to have read it two or three times at least, and to . . . at the very . . . probably the most important, to have met with the professional firefighters again on this very important subject to make sure it meets with every . . . all their requirements, Mr. Speaker, we'll move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 6 — The Podiatry Act

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Podiatry Act.

Mr. Speaker, The Podiatry Act is our response to the request of the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropractors to update its Act to be consistent with recent health professional legislation and also to allow podiatrists with the appropriate qualifications to prescribe certain medications and order tests.

The government, Mr. Speaker, has worked closely on this Bill with many groups and organizations including the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropractors, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order. The minister may continue.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — At this time, Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge Dr. Ata Stationwala, president of the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropractors, who is with us today in the west gallery. Thanks go to Dr. Stationwala and to his colleagues for all their hard work in helping update the Act with this new Bill.

I would also like to acknowledge the important role podiatrists play in our health care system. As specialists in treating foot disorders, podiatrists have a variety of skills and experiences that can contribute greatly to the primary health care networks

as outlined in the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care.

Mr. Speaker, by allowing podiatrists to prescribe medications and order tests, we are following up on our commitment made in our action plan to identify and remove barriers that prevent health care providers from using their training and skills to the fullest. Such a move will enrich and enhance the way podiatrists serve the people of Saskatchewan. It will also help make Saskatchewan a more attractive place for podiatrists to come and practice. Mr. Speaker, this is especially important as we follow-up with another commitment made in the action plan to retain and recruit health care providers to Saskatchewan.

Specifically, Mr. Speaker, this Bill will change the name of the Act from The Chiropody Profession Act to The Podiatry Act. It will also change the professional body's name from the Saskatchewan Association of Chiropodists to the Saskatchewan college of podiatrists.

This name change reflects the trend among most educational programs throughout the world to refer to podiatry rather than chiropody. At the same time the change to college more accurately reflects the regulatory function of this professional body.

In addition this Bill will appoint three public representatives on the council of the Saskatchewan college of podiatrists, one of whom will also serve on the discipline committee. Doing so will give the public a greater voice in the regulation of podiatrists.

This Bill will also allow podiatrists to set up an investigation committee, and to set out requirements for meetings and other administrative matters.

Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to an accessible, quality health care system. We will provide leadership in making the changes needed to strengthen and sustain the system for the future. For this reason we believe it is important to bring this Bill to the House today.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of The Podiatry Act. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is also an important piece of legislation that the minister has brought before the House today dealing with podiatry and the formation, Mr. Speaker, of a college for their professional benefit to set out the terms of podiatry, to set out their professional terms, Mr. Speaker. And an organization for them to provide for the standards of their profession, Mr. Speaker, to set out discipline, to set out membership, Mr. Speaker, to set out all of those things that a college such as the College of Medicine — not the College of Medicine, the College of Physicians and Surgeons — Mr. Speaker, has; such as a professional body that the teachers have, or nurses, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very important piece of legislation for people in this particular field of medicine, Mr. Speaker, that they have a professional body and are recognized, Mr. Speaker, as

professionals within that body.

But, Mr. Speaker, in the case of any, any of these pieces of legislation dealing with the establishment of a college — the setting up of bylaws, professional standards, the setting up of disciplinary measures, the measures and the qualifications of incompetence, Mr. Speaker, proper conduct of members — all of these things, Mr. Speaker, need to be scrutinized carefully or what happens, Mr. Speaker, is they end up coming back to either to the floor of the Assembly again because it was not done right or it ends up going before the Committee on Regulations for changes, Mr. Speaker.

So I think it's important that the public, the podiatrists and the people involved in that profession, Mr. Speaker, get to have a look at this particular piece of legislation to ensure that it meets their requirements, that it meets the requirements that we as a general public have in the needs for this profession, Mr. Speaker. Therefore I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 7 — The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will help make Saskatchewan a more attractive place for occupational therapists to practise. At the same time it will allow for amendments to make the Act consistent with other health profession legislation.

In developing this legislation, the government has consulted extensively with the Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists. I wish to thank them for their hard work in bringing this Act today. We worked collaboratively and will continue to do so.

I'd like to acknowledge the presence of Marisa Chicoine, who is the member for Regina on their board and she's with us today in the Speaker's gallery.

Mr. Speaker, currently the Act requires that all occupational therapists have an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy. In doing so it prevents licensing an applicant who has a professional masters degree in occupational therapy without having first received an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy. Due to this legislative restriction, these fully qualified professionals are initially permitted to work in Saskatchewan under a restricted licence only. Once they meet certain minimal requirements they're required . . . they are provided with a full, practising licence.

This amendment I put before the House today will remove this restriction. Specifically it will now permit licensure of an occupational therapist who has a professional masters degree without first having received an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy.

We see several benefits in doing this. First, we expect this amendment will help make Saskatchewan a more attractive

place for occupational therapists to come and practise. This is especially important to our retention and recruitment efforts, as recently more schools are offering professional masters programs and more occupational therapists are graduating from these programs.

And secondly, this amendment, along with others concerning minor administrative details, will make the Act consistent with other health profession legislation.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our government's commitment to quality, accessible, and responsible health service for the people of Saskatchewan, we believe it is important to bring this legislation to the House today. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Occupational Therapists Amendment Act. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation along with the previous one, I note that the minister says will make Saskatchewan a more attractive place for health care professionals.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly a laudable goal and certainly one that needs to be furthered. Because, Mr. Speaker, the minister has been promising, I believe it's 600 new nurses across Saskatchewan along with other health care professionals and we're still going backwards. So any effort, Mr. Speaker, by this government to improve the attractiveness of Saskatchewan to our health care professionals is a welcome move, Mr. Speaker.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of occupational therapists that have contacted our office and want to discuss this particular piece of legislation and the Act in general with us, Mr. Speaker. So we need to have the opportunity to meet with them to determine exactly what their concerns are. I believe that the changes that the minister is proposing on this Act are worthwhile changes and certainly warranted.

However we need the opportunity to talk with the occupational therapists that have contacted us to determine what their reasons may be for that discussion, to determine whether or not they have concerns with this particular piece of legislation or whether they would like to see further enhancements to their Act, Mr. Speaker, to make Saskatchewan even more attractive to the health care professionals, Mr. Speaker.

So at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 14 — The Registered Nurses Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Registered Nurses Amendment Act. These amendments, Mr. Speaker, respond to a request by the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association to grant them the authority to establish and govern a continuing competence

program. This Bill will ensure confidentiality of the information related to a member's participation in the program.

The continuing competence program will serve as a confidential, self-assessment tool to help nurse practitioners identify their strengths and areas where they may need to be improved. The confidentiality provisions will serve to encourage participation in the program which will result in enhanced quality of care.

The SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) has proposed this program and we fully support them as they develop and implement it. Initially the program will only apply to nurse practitioners but may be expanded over time to include all registered nurses.

Mr. Speaker, we believe this amendment is important for several reasons. First, it will help assure the SRNA that its members are maintaining their skills at a satisfactory level. This is important because it will help to improve the overall quality of care that patients receive. Such a move is consistent with the government's commitment that was made in the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care to greater accountability and quality improvement in the health care system and for greater training opportunities for health care providers.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, this proposal makes the Act consistent with recent legislation for physicians. In 2000 a similar confidentiality provision was included in The Medical Profession Act. This provision protects information relating to the College of Physicians and Surgeons professional enhancement committee which reviews the quality of medical care provided by physicians.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also proposes to specify that a public representative's term of office on the SRNA's council extends to a maximum of three years with the option for renewal to a maximum of two terms. Such a proposal makes the Act consistent with other health profession legislation.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments were developed after consultation with a number of groups including the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association, the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses, and the Saskatchewan Organization of Health Organizations. I wish to thank these groups for all their dedicated, hard work in helping get these amendments underway.

June Blau, president of the SRNA, and Shirley McKay, the association's registrar, are here today in the gallery. I want to extend my appreciation to them and others who have worked on this amendment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I would also like to acknowledge the vital role nurses play in our health care system and in serving the health care needs of Saskatchewan people. The variety of their skills and experiences, their insight and professionalism are essential to building the kind of health care system we want for this province.

Mr. Speaker, as part of our government's commitment to

quality, accessible, and responsible health care services for the people of this province, we believe it is very important to bring these amendments to the House today.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Registered Nurses Amendment Act. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we have three health-related Bills coming before the House, Mr. Speaker, to deal with improvements within the system of health.

Mr. Speaker, this one deals with continuing competency upgrading, Mr. Speaker, of the nursing profession and we believe, Mr. Speaker, that that should take place and needs to be encouraged.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, in encouraging that we hope that we will retain the nurses that we have presently in the province, that those new nurses that are graduating from our universities will be encouraged therefore to stay in this province and practice here, and, Mr. Speaker, that nurses who wish to come and practice in our facilities in Saskatchewan will be encouraged to do so. Because there certainly is a need, Mr. Speaker, for further support within the health care industry, Mr. Speaker, to maintain our standards and to improve our standards. And any time, Mr. Speaker, that an individual in any of the medical professions — but nursing in this particular case — has an opportunity to upgrade, that is a benefit not only to that individual but to the institution that they're working in and to the patients they care for, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, we believe that this does have some certain merit. However, we have only had an opportunity of a day or two to actually see this piece of legislation. We have yet to have an opportunity to talk with nurses to see that it is exactly what they're looking for, and we would need an opportunity to meet with the SRNA and discuss with them whether this is what they're looking for or whether or not there are some other changes that they were anticipating, Mr. Speaker.

So at this time I would move adjournment of debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs Vote 30

Subvote (GR04)

The Chair: — I would recognize the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To my right is Brent Cotter who's the deputy minister of Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs. To his right is Curt Talbot who is the executive director of First Nation lands and resources. To my left is Al Hilton, assistant

deputy minister of federal-provincial relations. Behind me and just a bit to my right is Donavon Young who is the assistant deputy minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Behind me is Wanda Lamberti, is the executive director of finance and management services. Behind them is John Reid, executive director of policy and operations and Paul Osborne directly behind me, who is the assistant deputy minister of trade and international relations. And those are the officials that are with me here today, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And, Mr. Minister, I'd like to take this opportunity as well to welcome your officials to some of the very interesting times that we're in with regard to Intergovernmental Affairs and the economy that's associated with it.

Mr. Minister, I would like to maybe just start on an area that both you and I have discussed in previous years with regards to the economy in particular. And I guess I want to talk particularly about the mandate of this particular office and its mandate for intergovernmental relationships, trade and trade policy, and how it's going to be affecting this province.

As you and I have discussed, the economy of Saskatchewan is very dependent upon a global situation and in particular dependent upon how we deal with the exports of our products out of Saskatchewan. My understanding is that about 80 per cent of our production is exported outside of Saskatchewan, one way or the other, and about three-quarters of that goes to either the US (United States) or to Eastern Canada. So the US becomes a very large player in our economy.

I guess where I'm going with this preamble, Mr. Minister, is because of the situation that has occurred in Iraq very recently, in particular the Canadian response to Iraq and how we were involved, I'm wondering . . . from statements I've heard, member statements from your side of the House that your government was not in support of getting involved with the war in Iraq and in supporting the federal government, I'm wondering what your department . . . how involved your department was in the discussions with the federal counterparts knowing that there may be a fallout or a repercussion from those discussions.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, let me begin by sharing the federal-provincial dialogue that I guess did . . . has taken place and what didn't take place. The provinces, this province was not consulted on the federal government's position as it related to the war in Iraq. I can tell you that our people have and our officials have met with the foreign affairs unit in terms of discussing trade issues and potential or possible impact.

I would want to say that you are right, the Americans are very much our largest trade partners. They're our most important market. I think that that will continue to be the case. I would want to say that because of the diversification that this province has gone through in terms of our exports, that we feel that the impact will be minimal. I mean, you know, certainly there may be some impact in terms of travel as it relates to tourism. I'm told that some of the tourism operators are already experiencing a bit of a downturn in terms of their summer market. But I guess it's fair to say that the role of this arm of government is to

manage the relationship that we have with other governments as it relates to trade and it relates to that important part of our economy.

(15:00)

And so we will continue to work with the federal government, continue to work with the other governments around the world that our businesses are trading with. You know, as I said, the Americans are a very large and important market of ours, but we do have other areas of the world where we have some good, positive trade experiences as well.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, I think the seriousness of the situation with the American . . . trading with the US can't be overstated. I really believe that it's going to have some fundamental impact. You've referred to some of the indications already from maybe tourism or outfitting. It's going to go much, much deeper than that — that's my concern. There has to be a confidence between traders, and that confidence I think has been shaken considerably between the traders of Canada and the US, and the business that happens as a result of that confidence.

Thinking about Saskatchewan in particular, there was a case made by the other provinces than Saskatchewan going and making a statement directly to the US, saying that they, from a provincial point of view, did not support the federal government position and they in fact did support the US. And my understanding is that the trade complications have not appeared in those particular provinces.

I have examples and I don't have the actual names, but I do have examples of constituents of members from this side that have had direct experience when they go into the United States — and this isn't in a business sense, this is just visiting — they are not perceived to be welcome. In cases they were told that they wouldn't accept Canadian funds for exchange and it was virtually said, you're not welcome and we don't need you. I think that could have been diverted if the government had taken a leadership role and recognized the potential of our . . . the harm on our export, particularly to the US.

I'd like to have your comments a little more fully in what you think the remedy might be at this time.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, you know I think it's fair to say . . . And the member from Lloydminster will recognize that trade is not one-sided and trade is of a mutual benefit, both to the Americans and to Canada, both to Saskatchewan and the American states.

And I think the ambassador of the United States has quite clearly recognized that in the comments that he has made in terms of the closeness and the friendship between our two countries and the fact that our economies are very much intertwined. I mean we can get into anecdotal evidence if we wish, you know, where Americans have said that the trade relationships and our friendship will still be there.

I mean look, foreign policy is not always, I guess, on the same field with the Americans and with Canada. We set our own foreign policy, which we should as a country. The federal

government is charged and has the responsibility to do that, and they've done so.

The Americans have taken a different position, and I think you recognize that as well. And we don't always agree on issues but that doesn't mean that we shouldn't or can't remain friends and can't remain good trading partners.

And so I wouldn't want us to overreact to the fact that our foreign policy as it relates to Iraq is different than the Americans and we did not support them in their initiatives in Iraq. And I think what we would want to do is not overreact to that, but what we should do is have a look at what the facts are.

I'm told by my officials that there's absolutely no evidence the Canadian position on Iraq has impacted on our trade. And I'm quite confident that the relationship that we've built up with the Americans over the years will remain a close one.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'm sure you do and your officials do recognize the importance of this trade. And you're right, trade is a two-way street. But as I mentioned earlier, there's a level of confidence that has to accompany that level of trade. And we're detecting that that confidence level has dropped off. For how long, we won't know.

And there is . . . it's very easy for the US to start trading in a different direction, maybe to Australia or to other countries that have been much more friendly to their action in Iraq than we have.

I guess my question to you, Mr. Minister, with regards to this, has your officials — you or your officials — made any assessment of how long an impact that this may be? What the dollar value might be of a slowdown of trade?

And the American economy as you well know and in fact I think documented in the budget items, the American economy is going to grow, projected at something like 2.5, 3.8 over the next couple of years. We want to make sure that we can also grow our economy, but it would appear that without the American confidence of being able to accept our exports as we did before, that it's going to impact directly on our economy.

I want to know if you or your officials have made any kind of an assessment or an adjustment to the budget so that people in Saskatchewan can start readjusting their ability to adapt to your budget numbers?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I want, Mr. Chair, to speak to confidence, and some of the things that I would suggest to the member would constitute developing a good relationship and confidence with our trading partners.

And I think some of those confidence issues are the quality of our product, kinds of products, the reliability in terms of supply, our ability to supply on time. I think the trustworthiness in terms of this province and the reputation that we've established as being very trustworthy trade partners are really what constitutes a level of confidence as it relates to trade with the Americans or with other clients that we have.

The federal government is, I am told by my officials, doing an

analysis of the downturn and the impact in the downturn of the American economy on our country. I think it's, you know, it's fair to say when their economy is not as strong and not as buoyant, there will be some impact on us because we are a large country . . . large trading country with the Americans.

But I think what we have here in the province is quality of supply, we've got reliability of supply, and I think we're known as being pretty honest traders. And that in my mind is what really is important.

When I talk to people in the manufacturing sector, in farm equipment manufacturing just as an example, much of their markets are into the United States and it's, I think, very clear that we're very much leaders in terms of technology as it relates to airless seeders, those kinds of things. And there's a demand for the product and there's a demand for the product because there's quality, there's . . . (inaudible) . . . supply, and there's trust. And I don't believe that that's going to disappear because we've taken a different position as it relates to Iraq.

And I think that we, frankly, will be least affected of any jurisdiction as it relates to security post-September 11. We have a country or have a small province, we're in the middle of our nation, and I think security is another issue that will be a benefit for us here in this province.

Mr. Wakefield: — Mr. Minister, I don't know what discussions you might also have had with your federal counterparts. In previous situations where Canada has had an international involvement and we kind of went against the trend at the time, there was in fact contracts cancelled, from my previous memory, in the grain industry. I know there was some grain industry . . . grain contracts cancelled and there was some compensation negotiated for those cancelled contracts.

Has there been any discussion with your federal counterparts in terms of contracts that may . . . that have or may be cancelled, and what will be the remedy for those situations?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, you know, again I want to say to the member that we need to be, we need to be careful not to overreact. Trade is a two-way street — we need them; they need us. They rely on Canada for 25 per cent of their exports. So we're not inconsequential. And so it's not a matter that the tap will be shut off.

I mean there are contracts that are cancelled, international contracts. Historically that's been the nature of the beast. Sometimes a contract will fall through; it'll be cancelled. But we've not been made aware by the federal government or frankly any industry that contracts have been cancelled as a result of public policy initiatives that have been embarked upon by, you know, by the federal government.

And I must say, I mean, we took the position as a province and we supported the federal government in their position that, without UN (United Nations) support, that we would not involve ourselves in that war.

And I think that governments, as they are, have the decision, the responsibility, to create and develop public policy in the best interests of their own nation. And we can't be crafting public

policy initiatives here in the province or in Canada that are not in the interest of Canada. That's what we're all charged to do.

But I want to say that there's very much an American reliance on us for their exports, as we rely on them for exports from our province.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Minister, I have here the global questions that we ask each department every year. I'd like to send these across to you. They deal with the entire IGA (Intergovernmental Affairs) department — not just your particular area, because there's a number of ministers involved — but it's one department.

So I would ask, Mr. Minister, that you provide the answers to these in a timely fashion so that we can review them and comment on them and ask further questions if needed — based on the results of this — before this House adjourns.

So I would . . . I'll send these over to you, thank you very much.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, certainly we'll have a look at the globals. I think it's a process that's served the opposition and the government side well.

And so my commitment to the House Leader of the opposition is that we'll put them together as quickly as we can. I believe we can have them done before session end. We generally don't take that long to get them together and we'll expedite the process as best we can.

Mr. Wakefield: — That would be much appreciated. I have, I guess I have, following our earlier questioning . . . trade is a two-way street. I certainly would agree with you. And again, as I mentioned, that confidence has to be there between the two sides. And it would appear from some of the examples that have come to our attention that that is starting to erode a little bit.

It's like in a family. We may not necessarily agree on what we should be doing, but at the end of the day we go to bat for each other and we make sure that we're supportive and we can get over that kind of a misunderstanding at the time.

I'm asking you, Mr. Minister, have you got any plans to approach some of the markets of Saskatchewan exports directly, some of the state people or in fact some of the corporations that receive some of the Saskatchewan exports, to approach them directly, to try to convince them that the confidence level should be maintained at a traditionally high level, and that we will work diligently to overcome that impasse that is apparently perceived on the American side from your point of view, but is in actual . . . is reality.

(15:15)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I can tell the member that the Premier, as has happened in the past, will be meeting with the western governors this summer. And I think it's a process that's served both the states and the provinces well, in that we have an opportunity to discuss at a very senior level these very issues. We've not been made aware of any industry who have large concerns in terms of changes in their ability to trade with the

United States.

I can tell you that we would be very responsive to industry if we were approached by any particular sector to involve ourselves in discussions to support their initiatives. I think that's very much the role of government; that's the role of ministers and senior officials. We've not been approached by anyone, but I can tell you that the Premier I think will represent the province very well in terms of working to build on the very good trade relationships that we have with our American friends.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I want to welcome your officials too, Mr. Minister.

Along the same line that my counterpart from Lloydminster was questioning on, Mr. Minister, we've had a number of examples brought to our attention, especially our MLAs along the US border, from Manitoba all the way to Alberta. And I think they have trade implications because of the war; in fact I know that's what it is. We've even had reports of people having their tires slashed that are going down spending the night in some of the states along the border, windshields smashed when they're shopping in Minot. And we even have people go as far down there to not accept Canadian dollars.

Now I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, with things like pulling up to a gas station and having them refuse to fill your car with gas because you're spending Canadian dollars, have you had that brought to your department's attention? These type of incidents that are happening down there, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I think I read the media reports as you read the media reports. But I mean, let's put this in context. I've told your colleague that we've had no evidence of a negative impact on trade, and that is factual. I've indicated that we have had no approach from any sector or any industry as it relates to new impediments to them achieving their markets and . . . the American markets. I think that what we want to watch is that we don't over-sensationalize what may be isolated incidents and what I believe to be very much isolated incidents. This is a forum I think where we want to discuss the expenditures, the initiatives, the trade initiatives, things that we can do to enhance trade, but to unduly explore what I believe to be our isolated incidents, I don't think is helpful.

I think what is helpful is that we continue to share with our American neighbours our desire to trade with them, to share with them our confidence in them as a people, to share with them our support for their forces who are risking their lives every day as they encounter the circumstances in Iraq. And I think we want to share with them the fact that we, as Canadians, support a world where conflict won't have to take place and a world where people are not subjected to the kind of leadership that that country has apparently had over the last 25 or 30 years.

These are the types of things that I think we need to do. I mean, many of us have relatives in the United States. Many of us in this country are dual citizens. And I think that what you refer to as tire slashings and those kinds of things would be very much an isolated case.

I have many friends who spent the winter in the United States. A friend of mine came back a week ago and that was not his

experience. His experience was that this was a country that was shaken after September 11, given the incredible intrusion into the lives of so many American people, and that they're fearful for their sons' and their daughters' lives and that they're confident that they'll be victorious in the actions that they're taking in Iraq. But I just would want to say that what you raise as issues here are what I believe to be pretty much isolated incidents.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister, but I'm not just totally sure that these situations are isolated because from our understanding, visitors from Alberta are not getting the same reception that they are from Saskatchewan.

And I think maybe with the war, Mr. Minister, not even being a month old at this point, I think it's early to see what the ramifications and the retaliation is going to be from the Americans. I mean they surely cannot be happy with us as their next-door neighbour not standing behind them as a country. But even as we are so close to them as a province, I think somewhere down the road we are going to pay the price for the position that the government of the day has taken in the province and for sure in the total nation.

So, Mr. Minister, you say these are isolated situations. We even heard a owner of a company in Weyburn the other day saying that he's already had cancelled contracts with the US. And from his understanding with dealing with the US, this is one of the first times this has ever happened and this had just happened last week.

So I guess my question to you, Mr. Minister: will there be a constant monitoring of types of things like this? Because businesses in this province can certainly not afford to lose US markets and US contracts?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Yes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well I'm sure glad to hear that, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I want to go into your department a little bit, being that this . . . I think you may be the sixth or seventh minister in the last three years for this department. And I noticed in the Estimates that funding increase for your department is up over \$200,000, and I just wondered if you could give me an overall explanation of where this money will be spent and what the extra money was needed for.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, the two components of the increase that I'm responsible for as minister is the flow-through dollars that come from the casinos to the First Nations Fund and the increase to dollars to enable our treaty land entitlement initiatives to proceed.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Minister, then maybe we're not talking about the same budgets that I'm asking the question on. I'm asking the question on intergovernmental relations, and am I under the right department here and the right estimates?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — It's under intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Then I'll go into federal-provincial relations. I see the budget for that department, or that part of your department, is up \$11,000. Can you explain to us what the extra \$11,000 will be covering?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Sure. There's an increase over 2002-2003 of \$11,000 and that is attributed to increases in salaries. There is an increase of \$11,000 in operating . . . no . . . oh I guess that's it, the increases in salaries in federal-provincial relations.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well then, international relations. Could you give us an explanation of the \$54,000 increase and how that funding will be used, and will that all go to administration and wages?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Okay. There are two areas here. There's \$10,000 increase in terms of SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union) out-of-scope mandated salary adjustments, and there's \$44,000 for reinstatement of funding for international officer's salary. The previous incumbent was on an extended sick leave.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Okay. Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then we go to trade policy. And maybe you give us an explanation of where this money is spent and what actually that department's purpose is, what dollars are spent for in that department, along with the \$73,000 increase.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I'll just read — this deals with trade policy — and this part of the administration develops policies and represents the province's position on trade and investment policy issues at various international and internal trade negotiations under various forums and agreements, and it also manages Saskatchewan's participation in the resolution of trade disputes.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. And we go on down the list here to immigration. I see there's also a \$59,000 increase for immigration. And I was also wondering with that question, Mr. Minister, how we have input into people that we get to come to Saskatchewan and, you know, do we have a quota each year for the province itself, compared to what the overall immigration is for the country, and how that works.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — What I should describe here, the changes in the trade policy component, and the changes there are \$14,000 as it related to mandated salary adjustments. There are funding for the province's share of the legal fees in the softwood lumber dispute that we have with Canada, and the Canada-US wheat dispute — that's an amount of \$59,000.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Minister, do you have an ongoing negotiations with the federal government over immigration? Do you have input, as I asked in an earlier question? Maybe I didn't explain it clear enough, but do you have ongoing negotiations with the federal government over immigration that comes to Saskatchewan? And you know, numbers, how many people we would like to see to come to the province through immigration. Especially being that our population is dropping every year, I think it's very important that we try and hold our population at least where it is and we would like to see it dramatically grow, Mr. Minister.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We have, you know, just as a matter of course, we have discussions as it relates to immigration policy. And provinces do have input. Our officials meet on a fairly regular basis, you know, and I think it's fair to say that — not in all cases — the federal government listen to and work with the province. Kyoto was clearly an example where they haven't.

But I think it's fair to say that on immigration policy they have been very responsive to some of the thoughts and some of the ideas. You know, I think it's fair to say as well that Saskatchewan has been a province that's been built on immigrants. It's been built, you know, on immigration.

Our First Nations clearly were the base and had an established society here, and since people started coming to North America the face of Saskatchewan has changed somewhat. And . . . you know, and it's due to immigration.

And I think it's fair to say as well, we've got a province with a wealth of resources, a wealth of opportunities and certainly can be and should be a good place for immigrants to look at. We have . . . and we've been working with some groups in the province here in terms of sharing Saskatchewan and knowledge about Saskatchewan in European countries, and Asian . . . you know, and eastern European countries. You know, it's part of what we do and part of what the government does, working with some of the different groups.

So immigration is important. We haven't been, as a province, large recipients of immigration because immigrants tend to come to Canada and join with communities that they're familiar with, and a lot of it is based in the larger centres. The larger centres will have an Asian community, and so when immigrants come they . . . rather than to experience a dramatic culture shock, in a lot of cases they'll go to a community that they're comfortable with.

So I think there's a lot more room in terms of immigration for us, and we need to continue to work to explore those policies.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, do . . . when the federal government . . . someone applies to be accepted as an immigrant in Canada, does the federal government then say okay, you can go to Saskatchewan, you can go to Alberta, Manitoba, wherever? Is there any designation of where they have to go or can they go just anywhere they like in the country?

(15:30)

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — I'm told by the officials that landed immigrants have the right — and this has been determined by courts — to settle in any area of the country that they would wish.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, just an announcement was made by the federal government just recently here on . . . through the Prime Minister's office and he announced injection of million of dollars into a national initiative . . . We'll see an increased focus on bilingualism across the country.

Are you aware of this announcement and the details in this initiative? And could you outline the basics for us today if you do know what this is about?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I am aware of the announcement, but this falls under the purview of the Provincial Secretary. And so I think questions in that regard would be better addressed to her when her estimates are up.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, there is an area of great concern when it comes to international trade that is probably a little more near and dear to you and I heart than to many members in this House, and that is certainly the softwood lumber trade dispute that our country and our province is going through at this time.

And I know that in the past, Intergovernmental Affairs has been working on the side to try and stay on top of the issue that is being dealt with by the federal government, and to have an appropriate input so that Saskatchewan is represented at the table; that the federal government understands clearly the repercussions of this trade dispute.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could just give the House a brief update, if you please, as to the standing of the trade dispute at this time and how much progress has been made in the past year.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I want to say to the member that given the area that we both represent, this is . . . we're well aware of the impact that the softwood lumber dispute has had on industries in our community, which is why in this budget we put more dollars — as I indicated to one of your colleagues — to assisting us in terms of the legal fees that Canada has embarked upon to litigate against the US duties, which is clearly part of what we're doing as a province, part of what we're doing as a country.

We don't have a seat at the table as a province; that's a federal responsibility. But our officials are very much in contact with their federal counterparts; they've attended to many of these trade hearings in Washington and other places where they've been held. What we're attempting to do is support our national government in finding a long-term solution. We've been through this time and time and time again. And as you will know, Canada will invariably win in the courts. I think our position is right and I think that the Americans are wrong in this regard.

It's, you know, it's part of the protectionism that we see in the softwood lumber industry, and it's based on an incredibly huge lobby that the American politicians face. I don't think that the economic argument that they mount can hold up, and I think you'll agree with me on that.

And so we're going to continue to work with the other provinces and our federal counterparts and put what resources are required to hopefully find a resolve to this unfair action by our American friends.

You know we talked a little earlier about trade and the implications of Iraq and the American involvement, and we do have trade disputes with our friends. Whether we have policy

differences as it relates to the Iraqi war, we have some disputes as it relates to the amount of subsidy that they're putting towards their agricultural community when our farmers, without support from our federal government, are sitting here at very much of a disadvantage. Those are the kinds of things that we as a department attempt to work together with our federal counterparts to solve.

And the softwood lumber is one that I would like to see resolved earlier rather than later, because you and I both know the impact on our economy. I mean, if you look at the rollout of the expansion of our forest industry, in the last short while we've created 8,000 jobs in the forest industry. We've had people looking at the possibility of putting a newsprint mill here in our province, which could mean 7, 800, up to close to \$1 billion of investment.

But that investment can't happen until we have the saw-wood capacity, the sawlog capacity, and the saw mill capacity to produce the residue to make that happen. And it's very difficult, with the softwood lumber dispute on now, to attract investors into the saw mill industry. So it really does have a chain reaction.

In spite of that, we've been very, very successful in our rollout of the expansion of the forest industry — almost \$1 billion of investment by private sector investors here in the province, 8,000 new jobs. And we know we can do more.

But this is why it's really critical that we involve, not only with financial support, but with people and knowledge so that they understand Saskatchewan's position within our national trading team, our national negotiating team as they go into these negotiations. So we're very much involved and we'll continue to be so.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You raised an interesting spectre here that we have learned about, of course — many of us on both sides of the House — and that's, you know, in the area of international trade with our American friends. And of course one of the, one of the areas the United States of America always likes to pride itself on, Mr. Minister, is the whole concept of, in the area of free trade, is we need to let, we need to let the marketplace determine prices.

Certainly in North America right now we're at a overcapacity for the ability to provide raw material for the building industry. If my memory serves me correctly, it's in, roughly, in that 5 billion cubic feet of overcapacity right now.

So certainly as much as we'd like to see expansion, Mr. Minister, in the area of softwood in Saskatchewan, the problem is we're having a little trouble selling it. In situations such as that, we prefer to have the marketplace be able to settle where the prices should be and where the raw product will be determined to be coming from so that those who are in the building industry would be able to provide a quality product at a reasonable price to the consumer. These sort of trade disputes though, Mr. Minister, distort the marketplace. They're distorting it, the marketplace, in Canada and they're distorting the marketplace in the United States.

Mr. Minister, the federal government undertook a program last

year — and I'm sure you're aware of this — where they were doing an advertising campaign in the United States to the American consumer, Mr. Minister, in regards to the distortion of housing costs in relationship to the softwood lumber dispute and the extra tariff that was being applied because of that dispute.

Mr. Minister, I wonder if you could apprise the House at this time as to the success of that program. Is the federal government going to want to continue that program? And is there an onus on the provinces to be a part, a contributing factor, to that program to inform the American consumer the cost of having this softwood lumber tariff?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I think it's fair to say that the intervention that the Americans have taken is a market distortion, very much. It's distorting and changing the nature of their whole saw mill industry. I would make an argument, and I think we could make an argument, that they are protecting what are some very inefficient forestry operations in the United States.

It's having some very dramatic impact on the some of the marginal saw mills here in Canada. We've seen saw mills shut down. And I think ultimately what will happen is you'll see a saw mill industry here in Saskatchewan and here in Canada that's very competitive and they will be ready to face an open market situation, a free market situation.

The Americans as I understand it are not upgrading. They're mainly harvesting, running inefficient mills. And I might be oversimplifying this and I probably am because I don't know . . . pretend to know the industry that well.

But I can tell you that we've been working very, very closely with our softwood lumber industry here in the province, through their association, through individual companies and meetings with individual companies. And it's part of how we develop our position as we go into, as we go into these negotiations and discussions because Saskatchewan's forest industry is different of course than British Columbia's, and we have different issues here and we have different circumstances as relates to the cost of lumber, through the FMAs (forest management agreement), through the operators. So we have some differences and we have to ensure that we're putting the best face forward.

I can say that my deputy informs me that the marketing campaign was very much a part of what we pursued at federal-provincial meetings. We felt it was the right approach to take, and these actions are very much as a result of the work that the department has done at the officials' level and at the former minister's level.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, you raised the point of the differences in how . . . the softwood lumber dispute and the distortion tariffs that have been brought on to the industry in Saskatchewan. You also raised the point though of how it's affecting different provinces. And it's affecting all the provinces differently, and I'm aware of that and I appreciate that point.

Has your department, Mr. Minister, been able to work in

somewhat of a collaborative manner with the four Western provinces and, on a bigger scale, all the provinces to develop the strategies that are necessary to work towards resolution of the trade dispute and getting Saskatchewan and Western Canada's point across as to the extreme need to get this trade dispute ended as soon as possible?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I can say to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers that we've been very much involved with the 10 provinces and territories in federal-provincial meetings. And the goal is to — not only the Western provinces but all of the provinces and territories — is to help our nation go to the negotiating table with a common goal and a common front and a common approach.

These meetings take place on a regular basis. They're held in different provinces around our country, and I think they're very helpful in that we need to take a unified approach to the issue and I think we've been somewhat successful in taking a unified approach. What we haven't been able to do is convince the Americans that our unified approach is the right approach. So we're going to continue to work on that.

And we will as well continue our litigation against the US duties and hopefully we can come together with a negotiated strategy that will serve us over the long haul. Because, I mean, this just keeps coming back and back and back as you will know, and it's time to find a long-term solution.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In the softwood . . . Because of the softwood lumber dispute, we're assuming — and maybe you can help us out on this side of the House and for everyone in Saskatchewan — the impact the trade dispute has had upon . . . in Saskatchewan. What kind of job losses or lack of job creation has taken place within the last 18 to . . . 12 to 18 months because of this issue, Mr. Minister? And has your department received any notification, received any word from the industry at all, Mr. Minister, as to what the effects of the softwood lumber dispute is? Are there any pending closures of saw mills in Saskatchewan that are rising directly, Mr. Minister, because of the softwood lumber dispute?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — We, within this department, don't have the employment numbers. That data is compiled within the Department of Industry and Resources so we don't have those here. But I can say to you that our discussions with the softwood lumber industry would tell me that they have done everything that they can in terms of maintaining jobs.

(15:45)

We've certainly seen some temporary shutdowns — Wapawekka saw mill as you will know, the Zelensky saw mill in La Ronge — but what we haven't had, thank goodness, are permanent closures of mines . . . of saw mills because of inefficiency.

We have a relatively new industry here in Saskatchewan as you will know. The Big River saw mill, state-of-the-art saw mill — brand new. Weyerhaeuser invested hundreds of thousands of dollars and they're just . . . or millions of dollars, sorry, just recently. The Wapawekka saw mill is a brand new mill. The Zelensky mill has had new money put into it and there are

others that don't come to the top of my mind.

But I don't have the numbers. But quite clearly, it's had some impact because even the temporary layoffs will impact on the economy and will impact on the job numbers. But those numbers, you could probably get from estimates through Industry and Resources.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The relevance of my asking these questions or these last couple of questions, Mr. Minister, has been I think to help us understand your department's position, Mr. Minister, in working with our federal counterparts, the provincial counterparts in Western Canada, right across Canada so that everyone understands outside the boundaries of Saskatchewan the extreme importance of the forestry industry to Saskatchewan. Even though the mill closures that you mentioned are certainly deemed as temporary and that certainly there would be some sort of a change, Mr. Minister, in the trade dispute or an upturn in the economy on a worldwide scale, that certainly these mills will be up and running again and producing the product that the people of the world are needing.

But, Mr. Minister, I think it's relevant from your department to be able to express to our friends in the South and to our friends in Canada who are dealing with this trade dispute that they understand clearly the negative impact, even of temporary closures, but the negative impact that it's having on our province so that especially the federal government is able to go to the table with the appropriate resolve to end this dispute, Mr. Minister, because of the negative impact it's having on our economy. But we also trusted, you know, that it's also happening to our neighbours to the east and west of us.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the member for his comments and his question.

You know, much of the work that is done within government is sort of unseen. It's probably not widely known that we have retained legal counsel, both here in Regina and in Washington, as it relates to the softwood lumber dispute. Mr. Osborne is our chief negotiator and he has teams of officials who work in his branch of this department who advise him on a regular basis. There is a council of ministers who are monitoring this, working with the different departments, from Industry and Resources, from Saskatchewan energy . . . or Environment, SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), and from my department. There are too many acronyms here today.

But you know there's a lot of work that takes place. And a lot of the advice that comes from a ministerial level, based on what we believe to be the right approach, frankly has come in the form of promotion that we're doing in the United States.

So we're represented with good legal counsel, we think strong legal counsel. We've got a good negotiating team. We're certain we've got some very competent senior civil servants that are working for the province in this regard. And hopefully this, over a period of time, will result in some good, positive trade experiences with the Americans as it relates to softwood lumber.

You know, the importance of forestry, as you will know, is becoming larger and larger as that part of our economy continues to grow. When we look at 11 consistent months of job growth here in Saskatchewan, many of them record job-growth months, you can attribute that to what has happened in terms of the private sector investment in saw mills, in the two new OSB (oriented strand board) plants, and in the new saw mill in Big River, the expansion to the saw mill in La Ronge, the new Wapawekka mill, to the billion dollars of investment that's taken place in the forestry sector.

So it's clear that we need to find a long-term resolve. It's also clear that because we have been able to develop stronger economies outside of what once was primarily agriculture, that we've got an economy that continues to grow, GDP (gross domestic product) growth year over year. We're now looking at our job numbers that have shown 11 consecutive months now — many of them record months — of job growth, even in spite of the fact that we've just come off of two years of a terrible drought.

And you and I both know, having some farm land north of Prince Albert, the crop circumstances there is devastating. We also know that nature plays some tricks on us in terms of the amount of forest fire suppression dollars that we have to put in, but it's a valuable resource and that's why we're putting money in to protect it.

But the key has got to be to enhance our trade opportunities — whether it's in forestry or whether it's in value-added agricultural products or whether it's in farm equipment and short-line manufacturing equipment that we do so well here in this province. These are all part of what it takes to make our economy hum.

But if we don't have some fair-trade rules and if we don't have the kind of trade that the Americans, and frankly Brian Mulroney, envisioned when they were pushing through the Free Trade Agreement, then initiated by Prime Minister Chrétien, that we want to trade and that we need to trade.

And those are the kinds of things that we need to have as opposed to unfair trade distortions that our American counterparts are involved in as it relates to softwood lumber.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. There should be one final question here I have and then I'm going to turn it over to the member from Swift Current.

Mr. Minister, you explained to . . . in earlier in your response to this last question the work that your department is doing — and certainly we appreciate that on this side of the House, just to let you know, as much as you do — but I think we need to understand, if we could just get on the record, Mr. Minister, does the federal government understand the importance of the forestry industry in Saskatchewan? Is your department able to help the federal minister, the federal trade minister clearly understand the importance of the devastation the trade dispute has had on Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well I would want to say to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, one of my first experiences as a cabinet minister, many years ago — and it wasn't a good

experience I have to tell you and I'm not going to name the federal bureaucrat — but I was at a federal-provincial minister's meeting. I think at that time I was the minister of Natural Resources and we were doing a little small talk. And she asked where I came from and I said Prince Albert, it's sort of in the middle part of the province. And she said, well that's good. And she said, well what do you do up there? And I said, well we farm, and you know we have some cattle operations in our community, and we have a good strong forest industry. Oh, you have a forest industry in the province.

And so this is part of what we have to do is to continue to educate our friends in Eastern Canada and some of the Central Canada bureaucrats who don't have a good understanding of the diversity of this economy.

And so in one way the trade actions that the Americans have taken has very negative connotations. But on the other hand it gives us an opportunity to share the importance of a growing forestry industry here in our province and have the federal civil service understand that Saskatchewan is agriculture — sure it is — but it's also forestry and it's also manufacturing and processing; it's also oil and gas, it's also potash, it's also uranium which, by the way, is part of why we've embarked working with the private sector on the Wide Open Future campaign because there is a misunderstanding about the strength of this province and the things that have been happening here, and the changes that have been happening in terms of a stronger and more diversified economy.

And I think so . . . these are all the kinds of things that give us exposure to people outside of this province, to tell them about how great a province it is and how strong this economy has been, and how we're going to pursue more opportunities for Canadian people — people who want to come to this province to work and to do business and invest. And so that's why we're marketing through the Wide Open Future campaign.

And so in spite of the fact that we don't want to see these kinds of trade disputes that bring us to discussing these kinds of issues, it does give us a chance to expose the good things that are happening as it relates to the forestry industry here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, or I beg your pardon, Mr. Chair of Committees. You know we've been listening as best I could to both the questions and the answers and they revolve, quite rightly, around trade, trade issues. And obviously we have several very important trade issues in the province of Saskatchewan today that the minister will be working on and his department will have budgeted for, and so I think it's meet and right that those issues be discussed here today.

But there is sort of an overriding concern right now, I think — and I heard the minister downplay it a bit as perhaps anecdotal or non-existent — this overriding concern that the Americans are very aware of what position was taken by Canada and also what position was taken by our provinces in terms of this current . . . of the war with Iraq and with respect to the coalition.

And I wonder if the . . . I have several questions. The first one . . . and just by way of an explanation, the first one will be

whether or not the minister, in his new capacity, would have counselled the Premier before the Premier took the opportunity to stand in the Assembly and basically tie our foreign policy to the UN, much as the Prime Minister has done, without looking as to whether the action that was being taken around the world was just or not just? If he had a chance to counsel the Premier?

And then I would ask, in addition to that, since we're ending we'll ask the quick questions here, I would also ask if the minister could highlight for us what his department plans to do from here on in to try to repair, to try to rebuild a relationship? You know one province in our dominion, the province of Alberta, looked at this issue that we're talking about today and they decided to take a different position than the federal government. And certainly that was the option of this government too.

And they sent notice to the ambassador, the American ambassador to Canada, they let him know that Alberta stood with the Americans. We chose not to do that. So I wonder what specific measures the minister is going to take? Has he communicated with the consulate in Calgary, or the ambassador? Has he at least expressed our condolences for the losses of American people, or has the Government of Saskatchewan done that?

I know it will be difficult for this government to do that because of their anti-American stripe that runs through the Canadian left and through this party, through the party in power, through the NDP. They are far more comfortable beating on our Americans and engaging in rhetoric against the Americans, and oh by the way, quietly accepting the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement, quietly accepting the benefits of a \$7 billion trade with the Americans. They're happy to do that but they take every chance they can to rhetorically beat on those trading partners and those friends.

So I wonder if the minister, who seems to be taking all of this quite lightly, the position his Premier took, I wonder if he's prepared to stand in the Assembly today and inform the members of this committee what it is that you are intending to do as a Saskatchewan government to send a message to the United States to try to repair and rebuild the absolutely vital economic and social relationship, frankly, that we have with our American friends?

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I want to thank the member for the enthusiasm with which he delivers his questions and I'm going to attempt to deliver my response with the same degree of enthusiasm.

And the simple answer to did I counsel the Premier, the answer is yes; our cabinet and our caucus had discussions as it relates to the foreign policy position that the federal government took. And we did that as a group, as a collective group.

I want to say to the member opposite: you are masters of fear and of gloom and of doom — you are. You thrive on it, it's what makes you tick, it's what makes you operate as a political party, and it's why you'll never sit on this side of the House.

I want to say that the member from Swift Current should understand that we're selling the same amount of oil and gas to

our friends in the United States as we were before the federal government took this initiative. My officials tell me that there's been no impact on trade and there's been no evidence. I've had no reaction from industry asking for us to intervene in any particular area. So quite clearly, you and your counterparts take the position as it relates to the federal government's position.

(16:00)

But I want to tell you in terms of sincerity, no one should question the sincerity of this Premier — no one. No one, no one on your side has the right to, sir. And I want to tell you why, I want to tell you why. Because he was the only Premier to lay a wreath at the foot of the American Embassy after September 11, and it wasn't your friend from Alberta, Ralph Klein. It was the Premier of this province who was first to lay a wreath in support of the Americans after the September 11 initiative.

So you can come in here and you can use all of the anecdotal evidence that you want, but I tell you what, we on this side will deal with fact. Mr. Speaker, we're going to deal with fact, and the fact that there's been 11 straight months of job growth that you and the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party haven't even got the courage to come out and talk about.

You know we went through months and months of drought, and we had some tough job numbers. And the Leader of Saskatchewan Party poked his nose out of his door every Friday morning when the numbers were released and he says, woe is me, this economy is falling apart. And do you want to know something? No one has seen hide nor hair of him in the last 11 months as we have had record job numbers increase, as we have had record numbers of people going to work. The Leader of the Saskatchewan Party hides in his office and won't come out and say a word.

And I tell you, Mr. Chairman, that is why I say to the member from Swift Current that you have not got the right to preach gloom and doom around this province because people, first of all, believe in their province. And they believe in opportunities for their kids and they believe in opportunities for their family. But they also know that you have one agenda. They know that the Saskatchewan Party has one agenda and it's power at any cost.

And I want to tell you even people who may have supported your political movement, like Mr. Pederson from Saskatoon who issues a release saying: let the Progressive Conservative Party loose, let democracy run because it's controlled by a bunch of Saskatchewan Party people. That's what you're about. And that's what the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party is about.

But I want to talk about sincerity. You ask about sincerity. This Premier of this province was the only premier to lay a wreath at the foot of the American Embassy in support of the Americans after the devastation of September 11.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — And I want to say one more thing to the member from Swift Current. You stand to support the people of Saskatchewan? You side with the Americans who are out to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. Every one of you

over there, every one of you are supporting the Americans in their initiatives to destroy the Canadian Wheat Board. That's where you stand. That's where you stand.

So I tell you what. You take Ralph Klein's position on any initiative that you want, sir, and if it's not good enough for you to support the people of Saskatchewan and the province of Saskatchewan, what you want to do is move over there. That's what you want to do.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we had agreed to 4 o'clock adjournment of these . . . of these . . . and I'll . . . Oh and the member from Swift Current, I'm very much looking forward to continuing this with you but we had agreed that 4 o'clock we were going to move to other estimates. And I welcome your intervention. I really do. Because it gives us an opportunity to describe the Saskatchewan Party for what they really are.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that I want to — or Chairman — I want to thank my officials for their support today. And we'll be moving into the Department of Health. With that I'll report progress.

The Chair: — Order. Order. Order.

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm pleased to have with me today Glenda Yeates, who's the deputy minister, to my left. And then to her left is Kelly Kummerfield, the executive director of health human resource planning. Right behind Kelly is Rod Wiley, who is the executive director of finance and management services. And behind Glenda Yeates is Lawrence Krahn, who is the assistant deputy minister. Right behind me is Duncan Fisher, the assistant deputy minister. And to my right is Bert Linklater, who is the executive director of district management services.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker. First of all, welcome to the minister and officials. This is the first of our opportunities to meet in regard to the Health estimates, so I would like to welcome you all here and wish that this process goes very well over the next . . . longer than today; I'm sure we'll just get started.

Minister, I want to indicate that I just sent over the global kind of information that we usually request each year, and so that information or the request for that information is passed on to your department. And I would like to ask if there is . . . if you have any indication or what the timeline may be. In terms of prior experience, I believe the globals are very similar to prior years. What kind of timeline will be required in order for you to complete them and return them to us?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We'll take a look at it, and I agree that it is similar to what's there for previous years. And I anticipate

that it will be done expeditiously and hopefully you'll have it in time before one of your next periods of questioning. I'm not sure that the absolute next one, but in a couple anyway.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Minister. Minister, first of all, the Department of Health of course is the largest department in the affairs of government and there are many subvotes and sections that need to be talked about.

I would like to focus on primarily one area today, at least in part. I don't know if we'll get through it but I want to focus on it because it is first of all, very important and second of all, I think timely, and that is the whole issue surrounding the family physicians, the College of Medicine, the issue surrounding doctors' remuneration, contractual progress as going on. So in that whole general area is where I would like to begin today because I think it is certainly timely and it is very important.

Mr. Minister, I appreciate the fact that negotiations are going on between your department and the Saskatchewan Medical Association regarding a new contract between the physicians of the province and the Department of Health, and I certainly do not expect you to, you know, compromise any of the negotiating positions and discussions that are going on. But can you update the House and the province as to the status of the negotiations with the physicians?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I think the good news is that we're basically on schedule for the negotiations. The contract just expired 10 days ago and often the discussions didn't start until the contract expired. This year we did start a little bit earlier but we're still in the discussion stage. There are meetings set over the next couple of weeks and the parties are working at positions and trying to figure out some new solutions, Saskatchewan solutions, for the whole contract.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, Dr. James Fritz, president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association, has indicated in comments made and reported in the press that one of the very grave concerns that they have is that this contract has to address issues not only of remuneration, but the ability to recruit and retain and attract doctors to Saskatchewan.

Minister, I'm wondering if in preparation for these negotiations if you have prepared and could share some of the statistics in terms of the number of doctors, the age categories that they're in, and you know, what the projections are for retirements and things of that nature, so that you may have some sense of, looking forward, what the severity or the critical needs are going to be for retaining or recruiting family physicians and doctors in general?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I appreciate the question from the member around this particular issue. One of the challenges clearly is to look at the total complement of physicians in the province. And basically, through the College of Physicians and Surgeons, there are two ways to measure the number of people who are working. And I have the figures for the last six years, up until the end of March this year, around licensed physicians and active physicians, because that's not always the same thing.

But I would say that as of the end of March this year, 2003,

there were 900 family practitioners licensed and 729 specialists licensed, for a total of 1,629 physicians. And if you go back last year, that's seven more than last year. If you go back six years, it's about 101 more than we had six years ago.

Now on the active side, which is another count that we get, there are family practitioners — 716 who are in active practice, and specialists there are 503, for a total of 1,219. And that's the number that's more appropriate because they're actually providing service. That number is 21 more than last year as a total. And if you go back to March of '98, it's about 100, approximately 150, more than there was at that point.

(16:15)

But embedded in your question was also the issue around the age of doctors and the need for doctors over the longer term. I don't think it matters how we look at it in any way. Doctors are the same baby boom supply issue as lawyers, nurses, teachers, every other group, and they're . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Politicians, if we can put it that way, would be fine. And so practically, we have to make sure we've got planning that looks at a continual increase in supply.

I think one of the interesting statistics, which I don't have here but I know that some of the doctors sometimes explain is, because we've had a medical school in Saskatchewan, there's a much higher percentage of Saskatchewan-trained physicians each year because basically we have much more of a supply here. We still have many that come from other places and that's, I think, a real value to our system, but we also are doing a much better job of training people here. And clearly our goal in the long term is to train many people here, but still welcome people from all over the world.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, the information you shared answered a good part of my question. The part that I didn't hear you answer is, going forward do you have projections as to the number of doctors that we're going to lose due to normal retirement, that are going to reach the age of retirement?

You've indicated that we have actually increased the number of doctors in the province. I'm wondering if we're looking forward to say . . . We're currently providing funded educational seats, the College of Medicine I believe, of 60 seats. If we retained 100 per cent of them, is that going to fill 100 per cent of our projected needs or 50 per cent of our needs?

I'm wondering what information you have that looks forward in terms of the retirement age and things of that nature to try to get a sense, is our College of Medicine going to be equipped to meet the anticipated losses due to natural retirements, etc., in the province?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the best way to answer your question is to start out and say that this is a national issue that's discussed by all of the ministers of Health, all of the health . . . provincial and territorial Health departments and Health Canada on a regular basis because we have a national issue around supply of physicians. Canada has always been in a position where they don't train 100 per cent of the physicians in the country. And our challenges in that area are about the same as

they are across the country. Some of the . . . some provinces attract more doctors to their particular area depending on the decade and things like that.

One of the things that we are trying to do is increase the seats in medical schools across the country and we increased ours by five kind of in . . . at the same time as other schools increased by a similar percentage. We're continuing to look at that issue as we move forward.

The other thing is that there is about a 10 per cent turnover in the numbers of doctors in the province on an annual basis and that is replaced by graduates, obviously — new graduates from Saskatchewan, from other parts of Canada, from other parts of the world — but also doctors who move here from other places. That's been a part of our system for a long time. It's always a challenge.

One of the . . . Some of the programs that we've introduced in the last few years as a result of negotiations with the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) have included many retention programs that make it very positive for doctors to plan to have their whole career in Saskatchewan. And that's the kinds of things that are part of the negotiations with the SMA at this time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. From what I heard you say is that at a 10 per cent turnover and the statistics you outlined earlier, that's about 170 physicians, 160, somewhere in that magnitude, would be in transition every year.

Minister, I understand in talking to the dean of the College of Medicine that there is this collaboration across medical schools in Canada. And he was talking that that similar statistic exists right across the country, as you rightly outlined, and that the . . . there is a . . . perhaps the word is a growing consensus among the people in charge of colleges of medicine that there has to be a more significant increase across the country if we're going to get closer to having enough educated physicians, educated in Canada to meet Canadian needs. And as you rightly say, we've counted on countries in the past like Ireland and England and South Africa and things of that nature. And I don't want to get into the ethical kind of dilemma of attracting physicians that are trained in other countries to Canada.

And I'm just concerned, I guess, Minister, that in the past we've been able to rely on these other countries and that there has been adequate supply in terms of meeting the Canadian requirements by relying on these other countries. And I'm just wondering how long that's going to go on because I would suspect that countries like South Africa or those other jurisdictions are saying, just a minute; we better start thinking of how we can make sure we retain the people that we're training in our own countries. Because I suspect that they don't have a surplus really as well. And one day we may wake up and find out that the opportunity to attract offshore doctors is very limited.

Minister, you mentioned as well that there's some things that are going on that hopefully will improve the situation and the ability for us to, you know, accommodate foreign doctors. And I know that there's a program for example that is called the international medical graduate pilot project that is, I believe,

being sponsored by the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Department of Health.

And the object of this program is to try to find ways of standardizing or satisfying the College of Physicians and Surgeons that the standards of education in other jurisdictions and other countries are indeed in keeping with the standards that are expected in Saskatchewan and in Canada, and having some period of time whereby a physician from another country can work in Saskatchewan under the supervision and collaboration of Saskatchewan family physicians or physicians to see if the standards of practice and scope of practice, etc., of that individual are compliant and consistent with the standards that we would expect here, and to note any deficiencies and things of that nature.

Minister, I believe that there is one or two physicians this year in this program and that there is a budget on a pilot basis — I guess I'd like to hear from you exactly what the department's take on this is — that there is a budget that is provided that provides for some remuneration for the supervising physicians, that provides for monies for evaluation and follow-up and things of that nature.

Minister, would you outline from your perspective how this program works and what the objective of the department is in this particular pilot project?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm pleased to answer that question because it is a challenge for all of Canada to figure out how to have doctors who are trained in a system that's different than what we're used to in North America or in Great Britain for physicians.

What we have done this year is, working together with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, we've provided them with \$85,000 which allows them to hire supervisors who work with these foreign-trained doctors. And we have two physicians that have . . . are in the program. I think one is just completed; the other is still in the program. And it would be our intention that we would continue this.

That relates to family physicians. Our registrar of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Dr. Kendall, is on a national committee that's working on a similar program for specialists because often there are people who come with specialties, who would like to practise those specialties in Canada, and they need to be evaluated.

And so we anticipate that we will be part of that national program even though we're quite a small province and don't have as . . . maybe as many of the specialties for training as some of the other places.

So our goal is to participate in this as well as we can. Clearly, Ontario has taken some steps in this area and British Columbia I think as well, but we're participating in this on a national basis and we're pleased to have two physicians . . . family physicians who have been working with this, this year.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Minister, of that \$85,000, do you have a breakdown in the terms of what is going to the supervising physicians and what is going to the other

budgetary components of the \$85,000 program budget?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think your question related to how was the \$85,000 spent. Well the \$85,000 goes to the College of Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan. The College of Physicians and Surgeons where Dr. Kendall works, that's, I think, they cover those kinds of expenses in their own operation because it's part of something that Saskatchewan sees as a good . . . as something that needs to be done. So the 85,000 goes to the College of Medicine and then it's allocated through their methods of compensating supervising positions.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. One of the comments that I've heard in discussions with physicians involved with this is that they are concerned that too much of the \$85,000 budget is going to evaluation work rather than actual program spending, if you like.

And there would be the hope that there could be some review of the ratios of money that's being spent for actually helping the physicians be supervised as opposed to the money that's set aside for evaluation; the feeling being that maybe for the same amount of money that it might be able to supervise four physicians instead of two physicians. Or for very minimal increases, an increased number of physicians could be helped through this program.

The other part of it is, is that I guess I would hope that the opportunity is to look at if there are certain specific deficiencies that are curriculum-based or things of that nature that may be identified in this evaluation, that there might be some ability — and maybe there is, and if there is please share that with us, Minister — to provide specific bursaries or something of that nature to help the physician that is being evaluated to improve their credentials or to meet the minimum standards so that this can happen. Because I think for many of these individuals that come across over here and they may have very modest means and may not be able to easily fund some of the increased costs that might be expected.

So I guess the suggestion is, is that I would hope that the department looks at this program to see if there's ways that can be implemented, and adjustments to the program that can be made, that would allow instead of two physicians to be evaluated, perhaps four or six or whatever, to increase the possibilities of this program.

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that suggestion about taking a look at that. And in fact I think that's what will take place because this is the first year of this program and so what we think is that now that it seems like it works, then there will be a possibility of using a similar amount of money for more people. But we will raise this issue with the college and assist them in the evaluation so that we can do some of those things.

Some of the challenges around assisting the individual doctors who are going through the assessment, I know that's another concern that we're looking at. At this point, I don't think we have any specific dollars available for that and it's always a challenge. We're trying to get bursaries to Saskatchewan students at the medical school and how you put all these

together. But it's clearly a good suggestion that we'll look at as well.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. One other component to that that I would suggest to the minister is make sure your lines of communications with the supervising physicians are also very well established. Because I believe that these supervising physicians are motivated by a great desire to see to it that there are more qualified physicians available to the province and they do this at some considerable sacrifice of their time and energies.

And so I would encourage you to make sure that you don't overlook telling them more than once or twice that what they're doing is important and valued and appreciated because certainly from my perspective, I think it's a program that has some merit and that the people that are involved in it — the physicians that are being evaluated as well as the supervising physicians — should be encouraged to make this program successful. So thank you very much, Mr. Minister. Pass that on as well.

Minister, to a little bit of a different topic is . . . Last year the cancer clinics in Saskatoon and Regina were both concerned about the availability of oncologists and were taking steps to fill the requirements of the cancer clinics in order to get the required number of oncologists. And I'm wondering if you could update us as to the status of the cancer clinic and if they've filled the oncology positions that they were needing.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for the change in direction. And as it relates to the cancer clinics, I think I have some relatively good news on that front. In Saskatoon, by July it's anticipated that all of the oncology positions will be filled. And that's the first time in three years and I think it reflects the . . . some good recruiting and some other things but also there's more of a supply available.

Regina, they're not . . . I think there's one or . . . well there's a couple of vacancies at least in Regina that at this point we don't think will be filled by the summer, but they're still working on that.

But for Saskatoon, they've had three or four years with some challenges on recruiting and it looks like by this summer they will have their full complement.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's reassuring to hear because I think the whole area surrounding cancer is an area that is very concerning for people. And it's an area where timeliness is also very critical, so I would encourage the department to assist the cancer clinics in any way they can to make sure that the vacancies that still exist are indeed filled.

Mr. Minister, when I look at the sub-program votes on medical services, I note that the amounts are increased about 4 per cent in the fee-for-service and in the non fee-for-service areas. Minister, I guess there'd be two components as to why that might be. One would be an increase in the actual fee structure that might result out of the negotiations going on. But the other component at least possibly could be that there's anticipated that there will be more, more services provided, or the number of services would increase for any number of reasons — the demographics or whatever.

Do you have a breakdown about what was the ratio of increased services as opposed to increased fees?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think around this particular area it's always a challenge. It's an attempt to set out a budget of what's anticipated both on . . . as it relates to a negotiated increase on the fee for service and on the utilization of the service.

And I think that's the . . . really the question. I think practically there are a couple of other factors that are involved as well in the number that shows as a year over year increase. Sometimes, I mean we do have not dramatic changes but slight ups and downs around utilization.

One of the other factors here for this year and why that number might be 4 per cent as opposed to 7, or whatever it is, relates to the fact that more and more physicians are going on to a different method of payment and so their payments go under an alternate method that goes often through the health authority budgets as opposed through this budget. And so with more physicians we . . . And we have to try to estimate how much of that might happen in a particular year, and so that's a factor as well.

So it's utilization, it's fees, but it's also changing ways of paying. And it also does relate to the total physician compensation issue in the province.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, on April 14 to 18 the accreditation team was at the University of Saskatchewan at the College of Medicine and as a result on November 1, 2002 wrote a letter to the president of the university talking about the accreditation of the College of Medicine.

And in this document that they provided, they talked about the fact that there were I believe 10 specific categories and recommendations that were . . . seemed to be in non-compliance or in . . . identified as being deficiencies. And on the basis they voted or decided as a accreditation committee and a team to, and I quote:

After reviewing the report of the survey team, the LCME voted to place the program on probation.

And then they listed the reasons why this probationary status was going to be applied to the College of Medicine.

Mr. Minister, as a result of that concern I believe that the College of Medicine has identified that 8 of the 10 deficiencies they could address through organization and, you know, structural kind of readjustments and that there were two areas that were particularly of concern that had monetary consequences. And those two areas were in the clinical status and in the library.

Minister, I wonder if you would comment on the department's response to this, and particularly response to the fact that the department received recommendations from the Co-Chairs of the Saskatchewan Academic Health Sciences Network which were looking at these issues and were proposing specific recommendations, particularly in these two deficiencies that had monetary and budgetary issues surrounding them, and that in a letter dated February 25 to the deputy minister of Learning

and the deputy minister of Health they passed this information on.

The Finance minister said he hadn't seen any of this information in the budget preparation, and I would like to give you the opportunity to indicate from the Department of Health standpoint where the breakdown between this whole process and the Finance minister occurred.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the member's referring to a letter which was effectively a letter for discussion. If you read the last line it says, I would be pleased to meet with you to further discuss these requirements. And it was a draft letter.

Subsequent to that letter there was a meeting of the Academic Health Sciences Network Board. They looked at these particular issues. There are two task groups — one of them that deals with the library; one of them that deals with the clinical facility needs.

The initial information needs a lot of work. The people are working on these various items. And the task group's job is to further analyze and discuss what the requirements are, and bring back those particular recommendations to the Academic Health Sciences Board. This is an ongoing process. It's one that has been worked on even before the accreditation process started because we knew there was some challenges.

I think what the accreditation does is allow for some focus in some particular areas and, as you've said, 8 out of 10 they can deal with without extra resources. These ones require some resources but they need quite a bit of further clarity before any particular answer can be given.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Well, Minister, I guess we can quibble about what this letter meant. It said that a details resource is required, and in the letter that was included with the letter to the deputy minister of Health and of Learning, there is the letter that was directed from the health sciences network to the president of the University of Saskatchewan. And they had outlined exactly what their work had totalled and also included a schedule of very specific dollar expenditures and the way these dollars would be expended, including the staffing full-time equivalents and the money in the clinical department for heads, faculty positions, part-time, full-time, and administrative support.

Minister, certainly from the reports from the University of Saskatchewan it would seem very clear to me and to anybody objectively following this, is that the University of Saskatchewan expected much more than some ongoing discussions, that they expected a commitment. Because as I outlined, this report on the accreditation was tabled almost a year ago and the accreditation probation is for a two-year period. And I know in speaking to the dean of the College of Medicine, his hope was . . . is that this issue could be resolved entirely as soon as possible because it potentially has implications for people applying to enter the College of Medicine with this probationary status hanging over its head.

So, Minister, I want you to please indicate to the House and for the record, what your expectations are in the terms of a timeline for this to be dealt with and for the Department of Health to be

making the commitment that is expected in order to facilitate the College of Medicine getting off its probationary status.

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think I'll start out this by saying that it's absolutely clear that the government will support the College of Medicine and the university to make sure that it has a long-term future for the province. There's just no question about that. That assurance has been given to the president of the university, to the dean of the College of Medicine, and to other individuals. There's no question about that.

The document that you refer to — which is a draft letter for discussion purpose which I don't think has ever been finalized because there was a lot of concern around the estimates in the numbers — that's what's now being worked at so that there can be some official request that actually fits in with all of the information that people have. That process is ongoing now.

The accreditation people need to know a response around these things by September. Our goal is clearly to look at getting things in place before that. But we're going to do it in an appropriate way, making sure that both the Department of Health and the Department of Learning, working together with the university, together with the Saskatoon Health Authority and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority and others who are part of this Academic Health Sciences Network, that all of us are moving along at the same pace.

But there's absolutely no concern that this government will not be behind setting up the appropriate ways to make sure that the College of Medicine is there for the long term.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, you indicated that you're working on it, but you didn't indicate if you have a timeline in terms of when you expect that this will be . . . find resolution. And certainly, in the accreditation committee's report, they note and I quote that they're concerned about actually . . . And I quote under . . . I don't know if you have the exact same document that I have. Under page 4, after the 10 recommendations are listed, there's one, two, three further areas that are noted. And the third area notes the concern of the committee that if . . . And I quote:

. . . that a sharp decline in recent years in the number of applicants to the medical school from within the province is a worrisome trend.

So, Minister, that's why I guess I'm addressing this concern to you because the dean of the College of Medicine was very concerned that if this probation issue is not lifted from the College of Medicine in a timely way, it really does nothing to address the concern that was expressed about the declining number of applicants from within the province for the College of Medicine.

And so I guess I'm trying to give you the opportunity in the strongest possible way to make a definite timeline commitment so that the College of Medicine has something specific to work from and to know that in real terms — I appreciate the verbal commitment to the college — but they want to know a timeline when they can expect to have the resources needed to

specifically address these accreditation deficiencies.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I think that the member maybe didn't hear me talk about the timeline. September is when the accreditation committee needs to get some of this information. We're working together with the dean of the College of Medicine and the people in there. We're working together with the president of the university and his senior administration. We're working together with the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority, Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority; and in fact the total provincial health system as it relates to this particular issue.

All of these things are being worked at through Saskatchewan Health and Saskatchewan Learning and we're working together with the people that are involved. We will be making sure — and I think the assurances are already there — working with those people about how this can be done. And I think it doesn't serve the whole of the community well when there's . . . there are allegations that somehow this is not going to be done.

But I think that the key point here is that the College of Medicine has a new dean who is a good leader, who has identified a number of shortcomings before the . . . or around the times of the accreditation. He's working on those things. The university has some support there. And so practically what we all need to do is affirm the key role that the college plays in the total provincial health system. And that will be the position of the government and the departments of Health and Learning, and we'll continue to work with that.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. One short final question in this regard. I recognize and you've inferred that there are implications for these recommendations for both the Department of Health and the Department of Learning. There are also in these two recommendations at least implications in this document that there is financial implications as well.

Can the minister tell the Assembly, has he provided in his Health budget? Has he have enough contingency funds or where funds might be taken out of the Health budget to meet the Department of Health's responsibility in terms of its share of what the financial implications of implementing these recommendations are? Or is it expected that there'll have to be special warrants to address this need? Because I don't think that was clearly outlined.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think what I can say is that all of the various parties that I've mentioned — the college, the university, the regional health authority, Sask Learning, Sask Health — are addressing exactly the core of the kind of issue that you raised. Because some of the positions may be funded out of the fee-for-service kind of situation that you asked about earlier. Some may come from the regional health authority's budget around salaried positions. Some may come from the university budget through Sask Learning. And we have various amounts in all of these places which will help us address this.

At this stage we think that we can work together with them and get all of these kinds of things done. And it's also . . . Another factor is that it's going to be going over quite a number of budget years as we do the improvement, because the commitments often, for example a tenured faculty, relate to well

what kind of a commitment do you have over a 5- or 10-year period.

So there are many, many answers to that. I feel assured in saying that the government is strongly behind the College of Medicine and the . . . which is I think a great asset for the whole province. And we're going to make sure that this all works.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I see that the time has passed that's been allocated us today and I would like to close by thanking the officials for their attendance today and look forward to our future opportunities to discuss the health budget.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you. I'd like to thank the member for some very good questions. I'd like to thank all the officials who have been here to help me provide the information for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:57.

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