

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition signed by citizens of the province of Saskatchewan regarding Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation and their announcement that the 2003 premiums charged to farmers will increase by up to 52 per cent and further. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Lucky Lake, Macrorie, and the fine community of Beechy, and I'm pleased to present it.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition signed today from people in my constituency who are concerned about Highway 49 from Kelvington to Highway No. 35. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway No. 49 in order address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in the area.

The people who have signed this petition are from Kelvington and Quill Lake.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the alarming and deplorable lack of a hemodialysis unit in the Moose Jaw Union Hospital. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

This petition is signed by individuals, Mr. Speaker, from the communities of Regina, Strasbourg, Tuxford, Lebret, and Silton.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of the people of the Estevan constituency very concerned about the unreal condition of Highway 47. 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 this, Mr. Speaker, is signed by residents of Estevan and Calgary.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the 52 per cent increase to crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads:

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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the petition is signed by residents of Fillmore, Tribune, Weyburn, and Lake Alma.

I so present.

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

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Tugaske.

I so present.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from citizens concerned about fairness for Crown leaseholders. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I

present a petition to save the twin bridges:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take positive action to preserve the historic original twin bridges between the Battlefords and Battleford.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I present a petition today on behalf of constituents concerned with the condition of Highway 22 between Junction 6 and Junction 20. 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 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Grey and Raymore.

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. 12, 13, 18, 27, 35, and 36.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 27 ask the government the following question:

To the Agriculture minister: what is the total assessment of the Crown leased ranch land, and what is the average quarter section assessment of this same land?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Ms. Julé: — Merci, Monsieur le président. Mes chers collègues je vous présente membres de l'Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise. Jennie Baudais est le présidente et aussi députée de la communauté, Bellevue. Nous espérons que vous avez passé une journée intéressante au Palais législative.

Savez que les portes des membres de la partie saskatchewanais sont toujours ouvertes.

Bienvenue aux invités distingués. Merci, Monsieur le président.

(Translation: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Members, I present to you members of l'Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise. Jennie Baudais is the president and also a deputy from the community of Bellevue.

We hope that you have had an interesting day at the Legislative Assembly.

Please know that the doors of members of the Saskatchewan Party are always open.

Welcome to our distinguished guests. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.)

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I can see that the hon. member opposite and myself are both very motivated today to improve our bilingualism.

Mr. Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I introduce to you and all the members of the House today, le présidente, Jennie Baudais and Équipe francosaskoise, members of the ACF (Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise) here today. And I'll mention that Jennie's from Bellevue, Saskatchewan, where I think they have the world's largest pea plant. That's right. We always have something bigger in every town in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Baudais is an ardent supporter and champion of the Saskatchewan francophone community since 1983 and has worked tirelessly — as I do believe most of this group of people have on behalf of their communities — so much so that she has been the elected president of the Assemblée communautaire francosaskoise.

And I've had the pleasure of meeting several times Ms. Baudais and know that she's not only passionate about her heritage but also the province, having been born and raised in the Wakaw-Bellevue area. And she does continue to work hard for the community and was instrumental in building the cultural centre.

Now along with being the president of ACF, she's also a board member for the hamlet of St. Isidore-de-Bellevue. I don't think I knew that.

Later this afternoon I look forward to meeting with Ms. Baudais and becoming more familiar with Saskatchewan francophone interests and concerns.

But I will say on behalf of my colleagues in the legislature:

Merci à vous, les francosaskois et les francosaskoise, pour votre contribution à notre province.

(Translation: Thank you, francophone residents, for your contribution to our province.)

I thank all members and ask them to welcome Ms. Baudais and members of the delegation to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, it's my pleasure to introduce, seated in your gallery, Mr. David Anderson, Member of Parliament from Cypress Hills—Grasslands. Mr. Anderson is also the Member of Parliament for constituents from seven MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) on this side of the House, and he sits with his Majesty's Loyal Opposition as the Agriculture critic which is very fitting because he represents some of the best farmers in the world.

So if you join with me to welcome our friend, Mr. Anderson.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure if all these guests are here yet today. These are guests that are here for the honours and emblems. Can you let me know if you're in the gallery? If not, I'll wait until a little bit later. Thank you very much.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join my colleague from Kindersley in welcoming to the House today the MP (Member of Parliament) for Cypress Hills—Grasslands, Mr. David Anderson.

Mr. Anderson has been a personal friend of mine; I met him when I first moved to the Cypress Hills area about 20 years ago and we've developed a good friendship over that time which has stood some rather important tests. He was also a customer of mine, and when you can leave a big, important combine deal as friends — when you're on either side of the contract — I think the deal was probably pretty fair.

So I'd like to welcome Mr. Anderson to our Assembly, and I'd like to congratulate him on his fine work as the MP representing our area. He's a man of integrity, and I trust him implicitly with our interests. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Major Projects Underway in Saskatchewan

Mr. Trew: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's future is wide open. Indications of this are all around us — job numbers up, manufacturing shipments up, exports up, potash sales up, housing starts up.

Mr. Speaker, about the only two things in Saskatchewan that are going down are social assistance caseloads and the Leader of the Opposition's popularity. Small wonder they're so gloomy over there all the time.

Mr. Speaker, we're not the only ones that recognize that Saskatchewan is on a roll. Here's a sample of the more than 280 major projects worth more than \$7 billion that are currently underway in Saskatchewan.

Philom Bios Incorporated and Sask Pulse Growers, a pulse field lab in Saskatoon, \$10 million; the Hi-Lite Custom Feedlots of Melfort, a 20,000 head cattle feedlot, \$10 million; Stoughton Feed Processing feed plant, \$2.4 million; the Beefeater Inn in Estevan, renovations, \$3 million; Springwood Development, a \$30 million retail complex in P.A. (Prince Albert); Saskatoon Hyundai, KIA — they must be selling some cars, Mr. Speaker — a new showroom, two and a half million dollars.

The list goes on and on. Clearly investors have confidence in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, we have a plan for Saskatchewan and it's working.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

South East Saskatchewan Association Awards Program

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, recently the South East Saskatchewan Association for Culture, Recreation and Sport held their annual awards program.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of the large geographic area the Southeast covers, this awards program has . . . have been held in a number of communities each year. This year's program was held in the community of Odessa.

The purpose of the South East Saskatchewan Association for Culture, Recreation and Sport is to develop . . . foster the development and delivery of culture, recreation, and sport for the benefit of all peoples in the southeast region.

Mr. Speaker, this southeast region actually organizes and hosts programs, and assists in a number of programs in the area including community consultations, resource persons, district workshops, official development; and 25 other different organizations and projects are assisted by this region.

Mr. Speaker, the awards program honours people in a number of different areas including culture, heritage, recreation, youth, coach, athlete, sport administrator, and team.

And of particular note, I'd like to congratulate Don and Dell Dayle of Langbank for their recognition in the area of recreation for their work in the Langbank Recreation Board, and well as Dennis Scott of Whitewood for his work as a sports administrator of the year.

Congratulations to all the award winners.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

April is Cancer Month

Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April is cancer month, and the daffodil is the symbol for the annual campaign by the Canadian Cancer Society to raise awareness and funds to fight this awful disease.

The daffodil, in its hardiness and brightness, is a symbol of hope and determination for those fighting cancer and for those multitudes of us affected by it.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most widespread and deadly forms of cancer is breast cancer, especially for women over 50. Before early detection technology, the survival rate was one-half of what it is now. A simple mammogram today provides the necessary screening.

(13:45)

For me and for most of my colleagues here, we need only make a quick trip across town to one of the permanent or regional sites of the Saskatchewan Cancer Society's screening program for breast cancer; it's a different story for women outside our major centres. But I'm proud to remind the Assembly that the Saskatchewan Cancer Society and Saskatchewan Health have supported a mammogram mobile unit for the past 13 years, and this morning a new million dollar bus was unveiled complete

with up-to-date mammogram and X-ray equipment.

Mr. Speaker, we have known for years that early detection is less expensive, less traumatic, and more effective. I know we all wish this new mobile unit a safe journey as it carries the message of hope for an end to the suffering from breast cancer to all corners of the province. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Valley-West Community Justice Committee

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, April 14, I had the privilege of attending the inauguration ceremony for the Valley-West Community Justice Committee. This is a committee made up of volunteers and professionals, and their express purpose is to keep youth out of incarceration and to provide opportunities for closure and restitution for victims.

The area is policed by three police agencies, Mr. Speaker: the Dalmeny Police, the Corman Park Police Services, and the Warman RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) detachment.

And the area that's covered by this new program involves the communities of Radisson, Maymont, Borden, Martensville, Warman, Dalmeny, Langham, Delisle, Langham, Vanscoy, Asquith, the Pike Lake region, and their surrounding RM (rural municipality) of Corman Park.

They are a very enthusiastic group. They've spent the last year in preparation for it and we wish them well because their objectives are very honourable.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Voluntary Sector is Strengthened

Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's future is wide open and one of the keys to building a successful and prosperous future lies within our voluntary sector. This government recognizes that, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we've announced the next steps to equip Saskatchewan's volunteer organizations to fulfill their visions.

The work of our voluntary sector reflects who we are and the values that are important to us here in Saskatchewan. We have a vibrant voluntary sector, which is a valued part of the social fabric of our province. It will benefit all of the people of our province to have government and the voluntary sector strengthen their relationship and share the resources as effectively as possible.

Mr. Speaker, three working groups will be established under the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative to address three key areas. These include enhancing the co-operative relationship between the public sector and the many components of the voluntary sector, building capacity within Saskatchewan's voluntary sector, and creating awareness of the benefits of volunteerism for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased and delighted to note that my colleague, the member for Wascana Plains, has been appointed

the Legislative Secretary responsible for the Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative. This job is in capable hands, Mr. Speaker. Our future is wide open and we have a plan to work co-operatively with all sectors here in this great province.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Queen's Hotel Destroyed in Fire

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness today I rise to talk about an event that happened in the small town of Qu'Appelle, about 50 kilometres east of Regina.

Mr. Speaker, about 2:30 this morning a fire broke out in the Queen's Hotel, which is located on the main street of Qu'Appelle. Mr. Speaker, firefighters, volunteer firefighters from around the area came to fight a heroic battle but unfortunately lost. Volunteer fire departments from Indian Head, Qu'Appelle, Fort Qu'Appelle, and McLean all responded to the call.

This building was built in 1883, Mr. Speaker, and is one of the oldest structures in the province. It has been the site of many historic events, not to mention the staging ground for General Middleton when he staged the area to go up to Batoche in the Riel Rebellion.

The community of Qu'Appelle and the province is going to be missing one of the nicest structures in the province — the Queen's Hotel — and we look forward to perhaps rebuilding a structure that in the next 200 years will still be standing to replace this great structure.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

White City Volunteer Awards

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a very pleasant coincidence that I can rise in this Assembly as the Chair of the Premier's volunteer sector initiative to tell my colleagues of a special event I attended recently in my constituency to honour a number of people who give definition to that sector.

I was privileged to attend and bring greetings along with Mayor Mitchelson, also a recipient at the White City Order of Recognition Awards, their program, and banquet. We were entertained by the Greenall School Jazz Band and the White City Dance Group. Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, added her dignity and an added sense of formality.

Mr. Speaker, Ambrose Reschny hosted and emceed the evening that recognized over 20 separate persons, and I won't name them all except Irene and Rick Temple, and Jack Ramm who received standing ovations from their peers. I will say that individually and collectively these citizens reflect our province's strength as they build our living communities.

The value of the voluntary sector goes far beyond the fact that volunteers will often work for free; rather they are the human and humane face and presence that implements a vast range of

programs and activities for all citizens.

Our province has the highest percentage of volunteer participation in Canada. One reason for that, Mr. Speaker, may be that there's so much opportunity here that we don't want to miss out; or it may be because we learn at a very early age that in Saskatchewan it's both a duty and a joy to work with our neighbours for the good of all.

Regardless, Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the recipients of the Order of White City Awards. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Roundup Ready Wheat

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to address the House on an issue that is of critical importance for the future of farming in Saskatchewan.

The proposed introduction of glyphosate tolerant wheat, or as it is popularly known, Roundup Ready Wheat, has the potential for serious harm to our economy. The greatest concern is with its marketability, or more correctly, its non-marketability. According to the Canadian Wheat Board, 82 per cent of its customers reject genetically engineered wheat. The consequences for the provincial economy, if markets were to be closed to Canadian wheat, would be disastrous.

Another concern is the problem of controlling Roundup Ready volunteer wheat in the years following initial planting. The control of volunteer wheat will require producers to abandon zero-till to the detriment of prairie soils.

Scientists are concerned with the possibility of glyphosate tolerant wheat out crossing with other grasses and weeds. This would further put the prairie environment at risk. Roundup Ready Wheat is of no benefit to farmers, consumers, or the environment. The only beneficiary would be the chemical companies.

In light of the gravity of the situation, I've written to the federal Minister of Agriculture urging him to deny the application, and requesting that marketability and cost-benefit analysis be added to the criteria used in evaluating the introduction of genetically engineered organisms.

I ask all members of this Assembly to support Saskatchewan farmers in their fight to preserve our wheat markets. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation into the Death of Lawrence Wegner

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, the minister caused tremendous confusion with his statements yesterday about Lawrence Wegner case and his apparent backtracking today. Yesterday the minister clearly stated, and I quote:

The police are going to be conducting further investigation into the matter (he said). Justice officials have been advised of this by the RCMP.

Now today the minister's completely backing away from these statements. Mr. Speaker, what happened? Why was the minister saying one thing yesterday and another today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to say what I said yesterday and what I will have repeated today to the media and what I will say to the House now, which is that obviously this is a very tragic and troubling circumstance.

There has been some suggestion, perhaps inadvertently through my office in the past, that the matter would not be investigated further or that the matter was considered closed. What I have tried to say to the media and I say now to the House is that as long as there are troubling questions with respect to this very tragic death of a young man, this matter is not considered closed.

And the major point, in my view, Mr. Speaker, and which I would reiterate, is that as long as there are unanswered questions, we need to do everything we can to try to find the answers. I cannot guarantee to the public that we will find the answers in this or any unsolved case, but I can guarantee that we will take whatever steps we can to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this all must be very troubling to the Lawrence Wegner family. Yesterday the minister said the RCMP is reopening the case. Today, he says the case was never closed.

However, that clearly contradicts a letter sent to the Wegner family by former Justice minister Chris Axworthy. The former Justice minister advised the family the case was closed. Now the minister is telling us the case was never closed. Mr. Speaker, it seems like the minister is more interested in covering his own misstatements than in providing the Wegner family with clear answers.

Mr. Speaker, why the confusion? How does the NDP (New Democratic Party) Justice department manage to botch so many cases or is this just one more example of NDP Saskatchewan justice?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, if there is any way in which any comments that I have made or anyone in the Department of Justice has made, if any of those comments have created any confusion, then for that I apologize.

But I do want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I did never . . . I never said, as the member just said I had indicated, that the case would be reopened. In fact, what I said yesterday and I repeated today is that this case has never been closed. This case must remain open as long as there are unanswered questions.

The file has remained open and we consider it to be an active file, Mr. Speaker. And if the letter to the solicitor for the Wegner family suggested otherwise, as it may be taken to have suggested otherwise, I apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. And I just want to assure the family, the House, and the public that as long as there are unanswered questions with respect to a very tragic death of a young man, we will do our utmost to find the answers to those questions.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Confidentiality of Personal Health Records

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. About 300 patients of a Regina doctor were very concerned to learn this morning that their personal medical files turned up in a recycling bin. The doctor involved has stated that they were inactive files that were supposed to be shredded and he has apologized to his patients.

Still, this situation raises questions about the confidentiality of patient files. Mr. Speaker, what legal requirement does the government have in place to safeguard the confidentiality of individual patient files?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, this is an area which is being addressed very quickly by the appropriate body, which is the College of Physicians and Surgeons. They have procedures in place to deal with the professional conduct of their members, and this involves a private physician and his private practice. My understanding is that they've already received some questions about it, and that they're working through this and with the procedures that are set out under their Medical Profession Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, in 1999 the government passed a Bill called The Health Information Protection Act. Section 17 of this Act deals with the retention and destruction of personal health records. It states that all health care providers must ensure that personal health information is destroyed in a manner that protects the privacy of the patient.

This provision seems to make good sense. There's only one problem; the Act has never been proclaimed.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP passed this Act in 1999. Why have they not proclaimed these provisions to protect the confidentiality of personal health records?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the legislation, The Medical Profession Act, sets out the rules for the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the appropriate procedures. They have codes of ethics within their profession, and one of those codes of ethics deals with confidentiality. They have a long history of protecting that concern. And they are attending to that right now.

We have legislation that we have passed and that we're working on. We've been in consultation with the partners that we have throughout the system.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, I would say that our government is very careful when we get into complex areas like confidentiality to make sure that we work with all of the people within the whole area that we're working on. We have been doing that. We are coming forward with some amendments that will allow this new legislation to go into place. But we want to do it in a way that will be effective in a very complex area.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, in her second reading speech in 1999, the then associate minister of Health said the following, and I quote:

In Saskatchewan today personal health information is regulated by a number of statutes, by professional ethics and bylaws, and in some . . . instances . . . is not regulated at all.

She goes on to say:

This patchwork of legislation, regulation, and bylaws reflects the health service structure of the past . . . It does not support the health information needs of Saskatchewan people today.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the minister said in 1999. But here the minister is condoning what has happened by pointing to the same patchwork of . . . mishmash of regulations and bylaws because his Act has never been proclaimed.

Mr. Minister, if the government was so sure they had the solution in 1999, why are they delaying these past four years to proclaim this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the question and the tone of that member is exactly why the people of Saskatchewan do not trust the Sask Party with their health system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the member, the minister says that the reason that they have mismanaged their own legislation is because we're drawing attention to the incompetence of this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the confidentiality of patient information is extremely important and this government should have thought through the ramifications of its legislation in 1999 instead of delaying for four years and making excuse for their inaction.

Mr. Speaker, it's not only these kinds of circumstances that

need to be dealt with. The question of what happens to medical records when a doctor retires or leaves the province or leaves his practice, Mr. Speaker, the whole issue of the confidentiality of medical records is extremely important. Why will this government not get its act together and proclaim this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a plan and we are working at it in this particular area, which is a very complex area. The whole area of information technology . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. One at a time, members.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, The Health Information Protection Act will be coming forward in this session to deal with these particular issues. And until that time, and in this particular instance, The Medical Profession Act covers it completely. We have confidence that the College of Physicians and Surgeons and their people will take care of this particular issue.

The bigger issue is, how do we provide care in Canada with many, many provincial records into a national record? Mr. Speaker, we in Saskatchewan are at the forefront of working and developing a comprehensive health record. We have to make sure that everything that we do in our province fits in with a national plan and we are going to continue working on that way with all of the partners in the system, rather than do some of the things that the members opposite want us to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Provision of Emergency Health Care

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, what the members opposite want the government to do is to make a plan and not always react to problems that are creeping up that they should have interpreted.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Speaker, it's not only in their mismanagement of personal health records that this government falls short. Mr. Speaker, the government is long in platitudes and always talks about what plan that they have. But, Mr. Speaker, people are really getting tired of waiting while this government's inaction continues to affect the health care system. We have the longest health care waiting lists. We have emergency departments that are overrun by patients needing attention. They are understaffed and they are overworked.

Mr. Speaker, what does this government have for a plan to take care of the overburdened emergency departments in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think this is another example of where this party and this government has a plan. Those people don't like it and so they are complaining. And so

what I would say is . . . He asked a specific question.

I was just handed a press release as I walked into the legislature this afternoon. This is from the Saskatchewan . . . Saskatoon Health Region. The number of surgeries surpasses 33,000 in the last year. The number of surgeries has increased. The wait list and times have declined. There are a total of 33,298 surgeries done in Saskatoon's three hospitals for the fiscal year ending March 31. The total is 2,544 more than done in the previous year. At the same time there was a steady reduction in the number of patients waiting for surgery. And overall there was a reduction in the length of time people wait for surgery.

Mr. Speaker, we're working at these together with the partners that need to be there when we're doing it, and that's the way to do it, not the way the members opposite are talking.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also have a letter from the Saskatoon Health Region dated March 7 to emergency measures providers in the region, and it states that the Royal University Hospital emergency department is experiencing critical overcrowding leading to occasional delay in patient transfer to emergency care.

It advises EMS (emergency medical services) that, quote:

. . . Ambulance personnel will be required to stay with the patient providing . . . care until . . . (the patient can be admitted).

And for a non-critical patient, that delay will not be more than six hours.

Six hours, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this causes a lot of difficulty for EMS providers because while they're providing this care, they are not available for other emergency calls back in their health region. Mr. Speaker, this also increases the cost to the patient.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the emergency department is so overloaded that there can be delays as long as six hours?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what we will do is work with those people to address those particular problems, and we will do it in a coordinated, planned way.

Mr. Speaker, we have waited for years to hear what the Sask Party position or plan is for health care, for education, for agriculture. We don't know what it is and we are waiting because we think the people of Saskatchewan are very concerned, especially as it relates to health care because they do not trust the Leader of the Opposition and his crew, and we want to make sure that they tell us what kinds of things they're doing before they have any, any opportunity to do any damage to our system.

We are going to defend our medicare system because it's the best one for the people of Saskatchewan. And we will continue

to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan want to understand the issue is about the competence of this government and its direction.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, what the people want to do is trust the health care system because they're working so diligently and hard under the circumstances imposed by this government.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority says that this is a multi-faceted problem, and we understand that that is true. Mr. Speaker, people of this province don't trust the idle promises of this government who promised — who promised — in the last election that, and I quote:

The election campaign of the NDP promised that all patients arriving at emergency rooms would be assessed by a health care provider within 15 minutes.

Mr. Speaker, how can anybody in the province trust that government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think that the Sask Party member opposite has made a fatal mistake because he's complaining about what we said in our platform in the last election.

Let's remind everybody what he said and what all those people said. And that member was the person who wrote it. He said zero money. Maybe at the rate of inflation, but zero money and we're going to freeze the whole system until we do an audit or review.

Well, we've seen what's happened in British Columbia. We're not . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please.

Supply of Health Care Professionals

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, everyone in the health system understands what this government seems not to be able to understand — that the problem in the emergency departments in Saskatoon, in fact in every health district in this province, is of staff shortages, of medical professionals. There's a shortage of nurses. There's a shortage of medical technicians. There's a shortage of almost every category of health professional.

We're experiencing the difficulties of believing this government who said there would not be delays of more than 15 minutes. This government also said in the last election that they would provide . . .

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

members. Too many people hollering out.

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, this government also promised that they would hire 500 more health care professionals. Mr. Speaker, that isn't happening. The NDP government have broken their promises and their pledges to this province, and the people of this province will hold them accountable. Why haven't they addressed the issue of critical staff shortages, Mr. Speaker?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have a leader who the people of Saskatchewan trust.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — And we have leadership in health care and education and in highways and a number of areas that the people trust and they support. I think what the member opposite is doing is he's trying to raise questions about that leadership and about that trust because he doesn't have anything else that will work for him.

I think that what needs to happen, Mr. Speaker, is that those people in the Sask Party better tell us what they intend to do with this province if they ever got their hands on it because we, on this side, will be working long and hard to make sure that they never ever get any chance to wreck our health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find the minister's attitude towards the shortage of medical personnel simply incredible. On a CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) Radio news report on March 28, the minister had this to say and I want to quote. Mr. Speaker, he said:

The Health minister says the government has increased nursing . . . seats . . . since 1999.

And he says, and I quote:

John Nilson says there's no advantage to training more nurses if other provinces can hire them when they graduate.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of an attitude is that? It almost implies that if we didn't train any nurses, then other people couldn't hire any of them. Mr. Speaker, that is simply irresponsible.

There is a critical need of medical personnel and this government has not met the challenges of providing the required number of nursing seats. Mr. Speaker, Donna Brunskill, the head of the SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association) says there's absolutely no plan by this government.

Mr. Speaker, why isn't the government addressing this? Are they simply waiting until it gets to crisis proportions before they deal with it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have an Action Plan for Health Care which includes a health human resources plan

which builds on making sure we get the professional people that we need in this province. It builds on providing operating funding. This year, it's an 8 per cent across-the-board increase for health care. It includes a capital plan for equipment and facilities.

And I don't hear the member from Swift Current rising in his seat and complaining about some of the things that we're going to do in his community because he knows what kind of positive things are happening in health care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, what are they going to do? They voted against our budget already. Are they going to vote . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the members opposite have a chance to vote with a good budget that provides lots of money for health care and allows us to work together with the partners throughout the system. I challenge those members to come and be part of the team that's going to build health care in Saskatchewan, not be a drag or an anchor on what we're trying to do.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Position on Conflict in Iraq

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The other day the deputy minister of Agriculture addressed the Saskatchewan Institute of Agrologists' conference and he made an interesting observation. He said that Canada's position on Iraq does not help our trading relationship with the United States. However, the damage caused by the federal government has at least been somewhat offset by the premiers of Alberta, Ontario, and BC (British Columbia), who have spoken out in support of the US (United States). Obviously, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Saskatchewan is not on this list of supporters.

Mr. Speaker, clearly the position of the Canadian federal government is going to have a negative relationship on our trade with the US. The deputy minister of Agriculture says that the statements by the other premiers have lessened the damage. Why didn't the Premier of Saskatchewan do his part to distance Saskatchewan from the federal position on Iraq?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I would advise the Leader of the Opposition to check the *Hansard* from the Alberta legislature, review the comments made by the Premier of Alberta in that legislature, and you will find the Premier of Alberta stating a position which was in support, in support of the position of the national Government of Canada, as this province has been in support of the national Government of Canada in saying that Canadian activity in Iraq would be governed by the United Nations, Mr. Speaker.

I am proud that our nation has an independent foreign policy — independent foreign policy.

Now I think then, Mr. Speaker, it is about time for the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party to once and for all speak on behalf of his party on this matter. He very, very nicely has tried to skirt taking a position on Canada's involvement or non-involvement in the conflict in Iraq. I think it's time that the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party stood and said to the people of Saskatchewan just what is his . . . what is his position.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has been very clear in our support for the actions of the British and the United States doing away with the tyrant, Saddam Hussein.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the comments that I referred to were made by the . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. Order. Order. I invite the Leader of the Opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. They don't hear so good over there. Mr. Speaker, the comments that I referred to earlier were made, not by the Saskatchewan Party, but by the deputy minister of Agriculture of the NDP government sitting over there.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan exporters are concerned about a backlash against Canadian trade with the US. Gerry Adamson, vice-president of STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), said a phone survey done near the start of the Iraq war found that some of the group's members, companies, were concerned about a potential backlash. Again the deputy minister of Agriculture said that this has been lessened by the statements made by other premiers. That means it could have also been lessened even more by a statement from our Premier, the Premier of Saskatchewan. But that never happened.

Mr. Speaker, in light of the potential damage caused to US trade relations by the federal position on Iraq, why didn't this Premier do more to distance Saskatchewan from the federal position?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I believe this is the very first occasion the Leader of the Opposition Saskatchewan Party has unequivocally said that he would support the activity of the United States and Great Britain in the Iraq conflict and not support the position taken by the national government of Canada. I think that is the first time I have heard that . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is my view — I've stated it widely — that the strong neighbourly relationship, the strong trading relationship that exists between our province and our nation and our neighbours in the United States of America will not suffer long-term consequence as a result of a difference of foreign opinion.

I well recall, Mr. Speaker, my father, I recall my father telling me about being called to service in Europe in the Second World War and at that time Canada went alone, that the American

government chose a different foreign policy, appropriately so from their point of view.

In other occasions we have stood with our American friends in conflict. In this occasion, Canada chose an independent foreign policy.

Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that it is my view that foreign policy should be decided separate and apart from trade policy. We do not decide the future of Canadian young men and women in conflict based on whether it's good or not good for business. We determine that if it's good for the nation and peace in the world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan's Centennial

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Today I'm pleased, Mr. Speaker, to make a statement about this province's centennial. As we said earlier today, the world needs a little more Saskatchewan.

La Saskatchewan est overt sur le monde.

(Translation: Saskatchewan is open to the world.)

This morning I joined the Premier to officially launch the planning for Saskatchewan's centennial year in 2005. The government announced the injection of another 20 million over the next three years for centennial initiatives through the new district . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order please, members. I would just ask members to tone down a bit so we can hear this statement.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government announced today the injection of another 20 million over the next three years for centennial initiatives through the new distribution strategy for the Community Initiatives Fund. Mr. Speaker, this 20 million is in addition to the 120 million the government already committed through the Centenary Fund for infrastructure and such key areas as schools, parks, roads, and social housing.

This morning's announcement unveiled two exciting new programs. The first, the Celebrating Community centennial grant program, supports unique projects designed to create new lasting bonds, personal bonds, and new understandings among people from diverse communities. These relationships that will build lasting legacies in our communities across cultures, across geography, across ages, and across physical abilities.

The second program, the centennial facilities grant program, will help seed renovation and construction projects that support community involvement and quality of life, especially in this chilly place where it may snow well into spring.

Both these grant programs will contribute to lasting legacies that build the pride and confidence of local communities.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to mention that our government's partnerships with key provincial organizations has been essential to this innovative planning for the centennial — partners such as Sask Sport, SaskCulture, Sask Parks and Recreation Association, the Community Initiatives Fund Board of Trustees, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, the Métis Nation of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Arts Board, and Tourism Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this morning we also unveiled the wonderful new centennial logo. And I know that people in communities, many of them are far ahead in planning their centennial activities already, and the excitement will continue to build.

For more information on centennial planning, people can check out the Saskatchewan centennial Web site at www.saskatchewancentennial.com. And, Mr. Speaker, starting today we can all work to make sure the whole world has a little more Saskatchewan.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it was my privilege to be in the rotunda with the minister and with the Premier as the new logo was unveiled to commemorate the celebration of Saskatchewan's centennial, something that . . . an event that's going to occur quite soon, in less than two years time.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly are excited about the celebration and we're certainly looking forward to the next 100 years.

We do have a little bit of concern with the new slogan that the Premier unveiled — The World Needs a Little More Saskatchewan. In our opinion, the world's been getting a lot of Saskatchewan as it's left our province and gone other places. We'd like to see Saskatchewan a little bigger in the world, Mr. Speaker. That would be a better goal for our province.

Mr. Speaker, in our first 100 years Saskatchewan has seen good times and bad times. Mr. Speaker, we have seen the expansion of the province as people came from all over the world to make their home and their future in this province. Mr. Speaker, it was an exciting time.

Mr. Speaker, we have been on hard times lately, but we do think that the 21st century holds a lot of promise for this province. And, Mr. Speaker, we also do hope that we will be able to celebrate our centennial and be involved first-hand in the many celebrations that will occur in the year 2005.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hillson: — By leave, to respond.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Premier and the minister, first of all, on the slogan which I thought was catchy and new and innovative, and the logo.

This is indeed a time for pride, and a time to express our confidence in what we have managed to accomplish in the past century, and more important, our confidence in what we will succeed in, in the next century.

Mr. Speaker, in the intervening 100 years since our province was formed, the divisions between the homesteaders and settlers, the non-Aboriginals, has largely disappeared no matter what country our ancestors came from.

In the next century any divisions between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, I hope, will also fade into the distant past. As I say, any divisions between settlers from one part of the world as opposed to another have already disappeared.

I did note that there was no reference to the fact that our sister province of Alberta is also celebrating. I think that it is appropriate they be included. Although I know I did complain when I was minister that we had some concern that the province of Alberta would be paving No. 2 Highway between Edmonton and Calgary with platinum as their celebration mode, and we would be holding a potluck supper. Notwithstanding some of the problems with resources, I think it is appropriate that we join with our sister province which is also celebrating its centennial as well.

I think this has been a good, good start. I would have liked to have heard more details but the mood and spirit in the rotunda today was excellent. The slogan is good. The logo is good, and let's have a blast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I ask leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In addition to the rest of our guests from around the province, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce to you representatives of thousands of individuals who work in the areas that protect the people of our province.

And I'll just ask that you stand when I introduce you so everybody gets to know who you are. Representing the commanding officer of "F" Division, RCMP Inspector Bob Mills.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Now representing the municipal police

service of the province, Regina Police Chief — oh there he is — Cal Johnston, who is also president of the Saskatchewan Association of Police Chiefs.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Representing the fire service of the province, Regina Fire Chief Jack Lichtenwald.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Representing the emergency medical service areas of our province, Mr. Dan Lewis, board member of the Saskatchewan Paramedic Association.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And representing our many federal civil servants who work in protective services, Mr. Claude Marchand, program services officer, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And representing Canada's armed forces from 15 Wing Moose Jaw, Chief Warrant Officer Steve Joyner.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And accompanying them today is the familiar face of Michael Jackson, the executive director of protocol and honours; and protocol senior policy and planning officer, Debbie Saum.

I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming our guests.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 19, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act.

On September 11, 2002, Premier Calvert announced the establishment of a medal to honour people who ensure the safety and security of Saskatchewan citizens. The Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal will recognize 25 years of exemplary service in our province by personnel with law enforcement powers and by those in other occupations and professions directly related to protecting Saskatchewan citizens.

The occupations and professions whose employees are eligible for the medal will be set out in regulations but they include: the police — municipal, RCMP, and others; firefighters, whether

career or volunteer; emergency medical personnel such as medical technicians, paramedics, and first responders; conservation officers, both provincial and federal; highway transport compliance officers; corrections personnel, both provincial and federal; customs and immigration officers; and members of the Canadian forces.

Since last September's announcement, Provincial Secretary officials have been meeting with stakeholders from groups and organizations who will be eligible to receive this medal, and I'm pleased to say that this initiative has met with enthusiastic support from these stakeholders, and they have been of great assistance to us in preparing the criteria and guidelines for the medal.

As I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, the medal will be awarded to personnel who have completed 25 years of exemplary service in Saskatchewan with one or more of the qualifying organizations. Now individuals who believe they're eligible for the medal, Mr. Speaker, will initiate the nomination process themselves and must receive the support of the head of the service to which they belong. Eligibility is effective January 1, 2003.

With this medal, Mr. Speaker, we're responding to a request by the police forces in Saskatchewan for provincial recognition of long service by their members.

Second, given the new awareness of threats to the safety and security of people following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Premier and I believed it was important to extend the medal to all those in public agencies who often risk their lives to serve and protect our citizens. And I'm glad to say that the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police welcomed this inclusive approach.

The government believes that we should publicly honour long and exemplary service by those to whom society owes so much.

Currently the Government of Canada awards the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, the Police Exemplary Service Medal of Canada, and similar medals for corrections and emergency medical services. These medals recognize 20 years of service anywhere in Canada.

The proposed Saskatchewan medal will recognize 25 years of service, a milestone that's not marked by any other medal. It's also inclusive since a wide range of protective services will be eligible, and this makes the new medal unique among Canadian honours. The legislative amendments being presented to the House today provide for the Protective Services Medal to be an official honour of the Crown, in right of Saskatchewan, presented by the Lieutenant Governor or her designate. In the case for other provincial honours, this ensures a sound policy basis as well as a prestigious status for the medal.

The Office of Protocol and Honours and Provincial Secretary will administer the program in close co-operation with the Saskatchewan Police Commission, the Saskatchewan Association of Chiefs of Police, the Saskatchewan Firefighters Association, and other agencies and organizations eligible for the medal. The first presentation is planned for the fall of 2003. In the first year, several presentations will take place and then at

least one will occur annually.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments to The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act also provides for the Commemorative Medal for the Centennial of Saskatchewan. The centennial of our province is only 20 short months away and now is the time to plan initiatives which will mark and commemorate this important anniversary for the people of our province and for the Canadian Confederation.

One of these initiatives is the Centennial Medal, and it will be awarded to citizens who have made exceptional contributions to the . . . (inaudible) . . . and our province. The Saskatchewan Honours Advisory Council will be asked to recommend specific criteria and nomination procedures in the coming year so that it'll be in place by the end of 2004.

Like the Protective Services Medal, the Centennial Medal will be an official honour of the Crown and presented by the Lieutenant Governor or her designate during 2005. And Saskatchewan will be the first province to institute a commemorative medal of this kind. And I might add, Mr. Speaker, I guess we could have hardly done it sooner seeing as this is our first 100th anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, over the past 18 years Saskatchewan has developed a provincial honours and awards program of which we can all be proud and which has enjoyed the strong support of members on both sides of this House. In 1985, Mr. Devine's government established the Saskatchewan Order of Merit. Ten years later, Mr. Romanow's government created the Saskatchewan Volunteer Medal whose latest recipients we will be honouring in this Chamber May 1. And in 1997 came the Saskatchewan Distinguished Service Award for non-residents of the province. Early this year we announced the Premier's Award for Excellence in the Public Service.

So, Mr. Speaker, today I'm pleased to continue this pattern of innovation and excellence in recognizing the achievements of the people of Saskatchewan by introducing legislation to establish the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal and the Commemorative Medal for the Centennial of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 19, The Provincial Emblems and Honours Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to rise today on this particular Bill which enhances our emblems and honours Act in the province of Saskatchewan. In particular, Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to be able to be a part of recognition to our security and safety services in this province for the hard work and the dedication and the exemplary service that they provide to all citizens, Mr. Speaker, from corner to corner in this province.

And often, Mr. Speaker, they do so under difficult circumstances. They do so in circumstances, Mr. Speaker, which at times even endanger their own lives. And we owe them a debt of gratitude, Mr. Speaker, when they perform those services that help ourselves, help our communities and in particular, Mr. Speaker, help our children.

Mr. Speaker, this new award, the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal, recognizes the hard work and dedication that it takes to remain committed to one particular service, Mr. Speaker, for 25 years. Most of us, Mr. Speaker, change occupations, change jobs more often than that. In fact as I believe the average is getting now to where most jobs last for about seven years and a person goes on to a new career. So to have stayed in the same job performing the same duties and under difficult circumstances, Mr. Speaker, for 25 years, I think does deserve an award, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the award is not just for long service, though. It's for exemplary service and can be awarded at periods shorter than 25 years to individuals that are judged to be very deserving, Mr. Speaker.

And we all saw the circumstances at September 11 in New York, the kind of service, the kind of dedication and difficulty that has to take place under those very extreme circumstances where lives are on the line, Mr. Speaker. And the people of Saskatchewan that work in our security and safety services do that day in and day out. They don't know when they go to work in the morning what circumstances they're going to face — it could be rescuing the cat from the tree, or it could be entering a burning building to save a child. They don't know, Mr. Speaker, but they go out every day and perform those services day in and day out, Mr. Speaker, and are certainly deserving of this award.

Mr. Speaker, the other award, the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal, Mr. Speaker, is also a worthy award, Mr. Speaker. And I'm glad that the minister clarified this, that it was just for the centennial year because that was one of my questions. Because it doesn't state in the Act what the criteria for this particular award is, and was it going to become an ongoing award, Mr. Speaker, after the centennial year, because it does in fact replicate in a lot of ways what the Saskatchewan Order of Merit is already doing.

And so it is certainly worthwhile in our centennial year to have a special award for that year, Mr. Speaker, that recognizes outstanding achievements in our communities for all of the effort that have to take place throughout society, Mr. Speaker. And so, we agree, Mr. Speaker, that this should also happen.

But we do have some concerns about what the criteria will be and we'd like to talk to the minister a little more about that development before this particular piece of legislation goes ahead, so that we can determine exactly what the minister has in mind for this particular Bill: what the criteria is; how broad spread this is going to be; does the minister have any particular numbers in mind for how many people will be receiving this particular award, Mr. Speaker.

So we would like to be able to ask the minister those kind of questions and have an opportunity to discuss this before the Bill moves ahead any further. Therefore I would move that we adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 3

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill No. 3 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand up in this Assembly today and speak to this Bill, Bill No. 3 — The Child and Family Services Act.

Mr. Speaker, I think we would all agree that children are a very special part of our lives. And there isn't an individual in this Assembly today that hasn't at some point or other been affected by either a sibling, a brother or a sister, in their lives or indeed their own children that have been born into the lives, a son or a daughter — and just the joy of seeing that new life come into that home and become part of that family, and to watch that life just begin to develop, and the joy that you see coming forth from that child as they begin to experience new changes in their lives and as they begin to grow and develop their personalities.

And, Mr. Speaker, even in this past few weeks as we've observed the situation in the world, and certainly the war in Iraq has brought it to our attention more clearly, the hurt that may come upon a child's life as a result of actions of others. And the importance it is for us to recognize how we need to indeed be very diligent in protecting the rights and the well-being of children, not only in our province, in our communities, but even reaching outside of our communities to the world around us.

And, Mr. Speaker, this Bill before us today, I think, just speaks very clearly to a number of issues that have been raised over the past number of years, and certainly some of the things that have been on my heart and my mind regarding how we treat children, how we care for children, how we provide for children.

And as I begin my comments this afternoon, I'd like to as well just point out some of the comments that were made by the Child Advocate in her final report: *Children and Youth in Care Review: Listen to Their Voices*, of April 2000.

Mr. Speaker, at that time a couple of recommendations came out from the Child Advocate's office and one of them was that every child . . . and she says:

That every child in care has a comprehensive, child-based plan of care that recognizes the importance of stability in the child's life and that honours the continued involvement of family, extended family and community.

And as well, Mr. Speaker, she goes on to say:

That every child in care has a clearly articulated and documented care plan . . .

She mentions that when we're looking and caring for children

that:

Children, family members and community members, particularly First Nations or Métis Nation representatives, where appropriate, must be included in the development of the care plan and must participate in the regular reviews of the care plans.

She brings another recommendation that says:

... every effort ... (can be, or should) be taken to support a child to live and grow up in a stable environment.

And, Mr. Speaker, of note ... I noticed one other recommendation that ... in that review of ... final report of 2000 entitled *Listen to their Voices* where the Child Advocate says:

... connections between a child in care and his or her family and extended family are made as early as possible and supported to the maximum extent. Children should not drift within the foster care system without every effort being made to connect them in a meaningful way with their family of origin.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, as we listened to the minister's comments the other day ... And I think what the minister has endeavoured to do is to address the number of the concerns that were raised by the Child Advocate in her report of 2000, as well as, Mr. Speaker, I think we can rightfully say that the minister and his government as well have been listening as well to some of the comments that have been coming from this side of the floor.

Well we've talked about the fact that it's important for us to recognize the relationship of a child with family members and extended family members. Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about the fact that we need to recognize that there are certain situations and circumstances in the communities around us in family relationships where a child may not have that loving and caring parental relationship or home environment, where they, where they receive the loves ... the love, where they receive the hugs, where they receive the compliments and the words of encouragement.

At times, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have children living in our communities, living in homes in our communities, where unfortunately in many, in many cases as a result of anger, a pent-up anger, maybe coming from the workplace or the effect of drugs and alcohol abuse we see in the homes, that children unfortunately are left in a situation of abuse and neglect. And tragically at those ... in those situations, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate but at the same time, it is fortunate that we have a means whereby we can give that child some support.

Unfortunately over the past number of years, the support mechanism has been for the Department of Social Services to receive the call and go into a home and remove a child or a number of children from a home environment and take those children and place them into a foster, a foster home situation, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, don't get me wrong. I'm not speaking against foster care because there are many families in this province that have provided excellent home environments while ... in meeting the role as a foster parent and offering an avenue of care and loving support for a child when their home environment has not met that need.

And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to say thank you to the many foster families across the province of Saskatchewan. However, I might add that there are many families that have left the role of foster parenting. And it's because of circumstances that they face. In many cases they've decided they can't continue on in providing that foster parent role, partly because of the financial problems that it raises in their home. But in many cases, Mr. Speaker, because of the stress that they feel in their home and that they've had to face as a result of the background of some of the children that have been placed in their care and the unfortunate lack of information that they've been provided with and then the circumstances they've had to deal with.

So, Mr. Speaker, when we talk about children in care, I think it's very important that we recognize the role of immediate family members. And, Mr. Speaker, we're all aware of the fact that children, not only do they get to love and have a growing appreciation and love and admiration for their parents, their mother or their father, or their siblings — older brothers and sisters or even younger brothers or sisters. But as well we can see where children grow to have a real admiration for grandparents and aunts and uncles. And in some cases, Mr. Speaker, it may be a very close family friend that happens to be a visitor to that home on numerous occasions, and that child may develop a kinship relationship with that family friend.

And what the legislation is doing is really opening up the door and asking the Department of Social Services to take a closer look — and not just take a closer look but make a greater effort when they are called into a situation of abuse and neglect in a family environment. And to look to the realms of extended family members and if there happens to be grandparents in the area or if it's an aunt and an uncle or, Mr. Speaker, if it's a close family friend that that child can identify with as being someone that they feel, they feel love, they feel that protection of that home environment, that indeed the Department of Social Services would make every effort to establish those relationships.

And rather than putting a child into a foster parent relationship where that child has no connection whatsoever with that foster family regardless of how well and the loving and protective home environment that foster family might provide, the facts are the identity isn't there for the foster family to build the relationships with those children.

And what this piece of legislation does, Mr. Speaker, is opens up the door to extend the opportunity to family members to provide that loving and caring and protective environment for that child, while the department endeavours to work out and address the problems in the immediate family home environment and address the abusive situations or address the neglect.

And, Mr. Speaker, I believe while it's ... we could say while

it's long overdue, it's time we moved in this direction. Mr. Speaker, regardless of the timing, it's certainly appropriate that this legislation is before us at this time, that we have the opportunity of debating this legislation. And having encouraged the current minister, encouraged past ministers to give some serious thought as to how we can deal more effectively and more forthrightly in providing the caring atmosphere that children need as they are removed from a situation of abuse and neglect.

Mr. Speaker, it's rather unfortunate that we have children in our communities and in our society actually living in very difficult environments. And, Mr. Speaker, I can certainly indicate that when my colleagues and I — the member from Humboldt, the member from Kelvington-Wadena, and a number of the NDP members on the government side of the House — had formed a committee to address the problem of children on the street in child prostitution, and we heard from many, many groups across this province. We heard from individuals, from social workers. We heard from men and women who are providing daycare programs for children. We heard from our First Nations community. We heard from the Indian family and child services.

And each and every one of them, Mr. Speaker, pointed out the fact that they felt it was important that we begin to recognize the value of kin and family relationships, and that government needs to move into a direction where we begin to recognize those important roles. And that we . . . as children are taken from abusive situations, until those family and home relationships are addressed, the problems are addressed, that young children actually have the ability to reside with a family member if at all possible, or where possible, or even a very close family friend that they can feel comfortable with. And, Mr. Speaker, what I see in this piece of legislation is it indeed does that.

But as well, Mr. Speaker, the legislation does speak about the fact that a study be done, as well, of the home environment. That we don't move a child from a neglected and abusive situation, place them with a family member, without first of all determining that that family environment we're placing that child with will indeed provide a loving, protective, and caring environment for that child.

So while the child is trying to address the problems of all of a sudden being suddenly plucked out of their home environment, the environment where they're very comfortable with . . . their parental parents and the role of the parents, but as well . . . and then being put into a strange environment, Mr. Speaker. That as we look at the extended family members and, Mr. Speaker . . . We can provide that child with the knowledge that they are going to be placed into a protective and loving and caring family environment.

And the piece of legislation does address that. It does point out the fact that any home that a child is placed into, any home that is . . . reaches out to provide that support, that there is appropriate measures are taken to verify that that home will provide that comfortable relationship.

Mr. Speaker, as well this legislation goes beyond just providing the common needs and the everyday needs of children in

abusive relationships. And it also looks at and recognizes that when a child is taken from a home and wherever that child is placed, that that new home environment may not always necessarily have the monetary opportunities to provide for all of the needs of that child — whether it's the clothing needs or the health needs of that child. And therefore the legislation as well extends the opportunity or the ability for the department of community services and resource management to provide the economic needs as well to follow the child into that home relationship.

Because, Mr. Speaker, not every, not every home may be in a financial position to just accept a child even though it is a grandparent . . . or a grandchild or even though it may be a nephew or a niece or maybe just a good close friend that that family has become very close to. And yet what they find . . . their financial resources may not provide them with the opportunity to . . . while they would have a desire and a willingness and would take that child in regardless of their financial well-being to provide that loving and caring relationship.

This piece of legislation as well, Mr. Speaker, as I read it, recognizes the fact that we also have to give consideration to the fact that there may be some fiscal needs. And the department is recognizing that and that responsibility and is certainly giving the department the ability to make sure that the financial well-being of a family is not put at risk because additional family members have been moved into that home.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I talk about family members, sometimes we're not just talking of one individual. We may be talking of a relationship of four children that have to be taken from a home because of the abuse and neglect in the home and be placing them . . . And, Mr. Speaker, it's very important as well for us to recognize that placing all four children in the same home is important. Because here again, we continue to address the kinship and the family nature of those children, and the fact that each and every of them have developed a relationship and have developed a love and admiration for each other. And if you were to separate . . . let's, for example, if you took the four children out of one home and you put them in four different home environments, Mr. Speaker, we would then be destroying that kinship relationship between those children.

So it's important as well, Mr. Speaker, that while this legislation recognizes it, while we look at kin, the family relationships, the close family relationships . . . And I've talked to a number of foster families, Mr. Speaker, who have also said that if a child was brought to the home and they realized there were two other children in that same home environment and they were taken to other . . . or being taken to other foster-family relationships, I've talked to foster families where they said they would prefer that all three children were brought and they would look after them in their home environment just to keep those family ties together. And I think that is important.

So, Mr. Speaker, this Bill certainly goes a long way to address the needs of children in care. And the minister I think made the comment about the . . . he basically said the amendments will provide caregivers with the assurance that they have the freedom and the ability to make the day-to-day decisions and take the actions necessary to safely care for a child. And he

makes comments that children and kinship care will enjoy a greater sense of security and belonging. And I certainly agree with that, Mr. Speaker. The fact that they will be placed in a close, family environmental relationship will certainly give that greater sense of security and well-being.

And I talked about the fact that the legislation . . . talks for a home study to make sure that home environment will be an appropriate, protective, loving . . . provide a loving and caring environment.

And the minister also, in his comments, talked about children who have been abused or neglected and have special needs as a result of that abuse or neglect. And it's important that families recognize what those needs are.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier about the fact that we have . . . some foster families are finding it very difficult. In fact, a number of foster families have left providing foster care because of that very concern, that children were brought into their care and they weren't really provided with adequate knowledge of the problems in the home environment that that child was removed from and the emotional stress and environment that that child was facing. And as a result, when a child was brought into their care, all of a sudden they had to deal with emotions that they didn't have any knowledge of, and they were not prepared and didn't have all of the abilities to deal with those emotional stresses that child was facing. And they found it very traumatic and difficult to deal with children in that nature.

(15:00)

And so it's important that families are well informed, even close kin families, that they're informed of the experiences that these children have been brought up.

Mr. Speaker, the minister said we will not simply place children with an extended family member or others with a significant interest in the child, and then abandon them to struggle with figuring out how they care for and support the child or those children. And those are important things for us to know, Mr. Speaker — that indeed the minister and his department recognize their responsibility; that this piece of legislation is not only recognizing the recommendations and the concerns that have been raised by the Child Advocate office; that this piece of legislation is not only recognizing a number of the concerns that, as an opposition, we have been raising over the past number of years; that it recognizes the importance of the family home, the family relationship, and the family environment.

And so, Mr. Speaker, while I've been giving the minister a lot of compliments, and his government, for this piece of legislation, it's important that we do indeed take the time to look very carefully at the legislation to make sure that it indeed addresses all of the concerns that have been brought to our attention. And that when children are provided or placed in care, that we not only are providing for the immediate care and concern and addressing the immediate needs of a child in need, Mr. Speaker, but, Mr. Speaker, as well that we are working very diligently and very deliberately to address the ongoing needs of that home relationship, that home environment that that child was removed from.

Because, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, that child or those children still have a bond to their paternal parents, to the father and the mother, that have . . . and then the home environment that they were brought into . . . that were born into and they were raised . . . would love to be raised up in.

So it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we go beyond just providing for children when they need care and attention; that we help . . . that we begin to, as well . . . While children are placed in a loving and caring relationship, that we look at how we can address the problems in that home, in that family relationship, so that the children then can be placed back in that home environment, and they can experience the love and the care and the compassion and understanding that each and every one of us, as parents in this Assembly today, would expect that we would provide for our children.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think, as we look at the legislation, and we give some thought to further addressing the needs of this legislation, it's imperative that we are very diligent in our studies, in our deliberation, and at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 4

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 4 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill No. 4, The SaskEnergy Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, we have sent this particular piece of legislation out to a number of groups to get their input; groups that we thought would be impacted by what the government is attempting to achieve here. And we've heard back from many of them.

As you will know, Mr. Speaker, this amendment would basically set up something that is, oh, perhaps for lack of a better description, a one-stop shop for line locates, and not just in the energy sector now. It would expand it to other sectors as well, and may be of interest to municipalities and other groups.

And it really expands on something, as the minister pointed out in his second reading speech, that he introduced or announced a year ago called Saskatchewan First Call Corporation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the minister in his speech indicated that the model that's being proposed here for the province of Saskatchewan in Bill 4 has been tried and implemented successfully in two other provinces — I think he mentioned specifically the province of Alberta and the province of British Columbia.

And as near as we can tell, Mr. Speaker, the information the minister has provided the House with respect to the experiences in those provinces is exactly correct — that this same sort of one-stop shopping for these line locates service has been available in those provinces and it is quite . . . it's working quite

well.

Now we do have a small, small concern that we are still pursuing with different third parties that we're talking to with respect to this Bill and it has to do with whether or not there is anybody currently in the private sector providing a service like this or similar to this that may be impacted.

Because let's not forget the Bill expands the location, service, the one-stop shopping, if you will, to — actually as the minister pointed out — to other services and talks about it providing call screening, notification services, facility monitoring, maintenance and operating service, facility location services, training of the corporations' specialized skills, and that's right from the minister's comments as recorded in *Hansard* on April 9 of this year, Mr. Speaker.

And so that's quite a wide-ranging set of services that this particular initiative . . . that Saskatchewan First Call Corporation wishes to offer the province of Saskatchewan. It may indeed be quite a bit more expansive in terms of services than is the case in the Alberta model or the BC model, and that's something we want to check into, some questions that we want to ask the minister in this legislature on behalf of anybody, any company that may provide those services currently and face the prospect of competing with a Crown corporation.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you might think, well what is the . . . why would we be suspicious of that? Why would we be worried about that? Well sadly in this province under this government, I think it's fair to say that companies have all too often had to compete with the Crown corporations for any number of things.

We know that the NDP government is competing with cable co-operatives, with the non-profit co-ops if you can imagine, Mr. Speaker, in the cable television industry. We know that they are competing in the security monitoring business. We know too, Mr. Speaker, they compete with the private sector in any other number of areas.

And so we are a little bit concerned that the scope of this goes possibly farther than it need go and we just simply want to find that out and get some assurances not only from third parties but also from the minister that this is something, that this is something that is as innocuous and potentially positive as it first appears.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are others who want to speak to this, especially as more and more information comes to the opposition and we get more and more input from third parties. There are other members who wish to address this Bill before we get into the detailed questioning in committee, and as such I would move that debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 8

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Thomson that **Bill No. 8 — The Youth Justice Administration Act** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Bill that we'll

be discussing I think is one of the more major pieces of legislation this government has presented so far. We know there's precious few items that they have presented but this will be one of the more critical ones I believe.

As we well know, the administration of justice across our country is partly a federal responsibility. It is also partly a provincial responsibility. We're also quite aware that the federal government over the last numbers of years has been looking at revamping the youth justice situation.

This should have had and probably did have some input from all the provinces and the Justice ministers from various provinces. Unfortunately I don't think it had the input to the extent that it should have had, because what happens . . . what happened in this particular piece of legislation — and this is where Bill No. 8 comes from — is that the federal government went ahead and created a new Bill and they said, now we have done our job. And then they left big vacuous holes in the plan and gave it back to the provinces and said, now you figure it out.

Now that sounds maybe a little blunt or a little crude but essentially that's what's happened. There is very little direction. The provinces as a group have not organized themselves into any one voice on how to deal with this. So each province is now left to go ahead and interpret what this federal law means and fill all the holes that are in there in whatever way they choose and see fit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's where we need to discuss our present government in Saskatchewan. And I intend to do that at some length this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, because as we look at what this government now has to do, they have a big job ahead of them.

We need to look at what the situation presently is in Saskatchewan. We also need to look at what this present government has done in the various areas. And so when we look at what they've done in the various areas, it'll give us either a definite feeling of confidence or lack of confidence in how well they're going to be able to dovetail the new Saskatchewan youth justice administration with what the federal government has allowed them to do. And so, Mr. Speaker, that's what I intend to spend some time on doing this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I have to cover to some extent what the situation for crime and justice is across this great province of ours. We have, Mr. Speaker, over the years developed in Saskatchewan a reputation for crime and criminality, which is very unfortunate. And I think it's uniquely unfortunate for this particular province, because this is a province where we still pride ourselves, Mr. Speaker, on being a province of volunteers and we have, as you know, a very high number of volunteers.

We also take a lot of pride in the fact that we have some of that rural mentality existing in rural and urban Saskatchewan which basically says if you see someone in a certain amount of trouble you help them, you help them. And yet when we contrast that mentality of helping each other and then contrasting it with what is actually happening as far as crime and fear that people live in, we say how could those two exist side by side. And

that's a very interesting question.

We have in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, been from time to time, and very much so in the last half decade or so, we've become the car theft capital of Canada — the car theft capital of Canada. Now maybe that started 20 years ago when everyone left their keys in the ignitions because nobody would steal a car, but that's no longer the case. All you have to do is walk down the streets and you will see cars that are locked up, almost all of them. You'll see the little bars, the red bars and orange bars, attached to the steering wheels to keep them from being stolen. So people now are taking all the steps possible to keep their vehicles from being stolen. So it isn't like we've become lackadaisical from our past history of thinking that nobody ever stole anything in Saskatchewan. They are stealing things. So we have become the car theft capital of Canada. How did that happen?

Well, Mr. Speaker, in order to understand that a little bit, I think we have to look at what's happened in, I believe it's New York City, a number of years ago. The mayor at that time came up with a policy that I believe was called the broken window policy, which essentially said that we're going to deal with all the small crimes in the area. And if we can take care of all the small crimes, the broken window kind of thing, if we take care of those then those individuals who will move from broken windows to vandalized cars to stolen cars to larger crimes, we'll stop that right at the broken window level. And they put a lot of effort into that, Mr. Speaker, and the crime in New York dropped dramatically.

(15:15)

And I think it should have been an example to our NDP government in Saskatchewan, because they could have seen that over the years. And they've been in charge of this province long enough that I believe they have to take responsibility for the province as it is today.

So had they looked at that back then and said that's a good philosophy, it's working, let's pick it up over here, we could have probably stopped this. But instead of doing that, they said well car thefts are car thefts; we have SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). SGI is great — at least they say it is — and so SGI will cover this off. So a few more cars get stolen one year, then the next and the year after that. And suddenly it ballooned, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, into a number one problem in Saskatchewan when we compare it with the other provinces in Canada — very unfortunate.

Now can it be dealt with? Yes, it can. Has it been dealt with in Saskatchewan? In one case, yes, and that's right here in Regina. I believe it wasn't very long ago, Mr. Speaker, believe it was the winter before this one, that people in Regina got together with their law enforcement officers. They planned a strategy. Law enforcement officers, social services, a number of other agencies came together and basically said let's work on this.

Now yes, they did have to go ahead and put some expenditure into it; they did. But it was successful. Now what it does show, Mr. Speaker, what it does show is we don't have to throw up our hands and say this is hopeless, kids are bad, kids are terrible, kids will be kids, our cars will be stolen, let's just, you

know, hide out in the basement somehow, bar the windows, come out in the morning and hope our vehicles are there. We don't have to have that mentality. We can work with it. Now unfortunately that concept has been initiated only in Regina, successfully so.

Now why did I earlier on, Mr. Speaker, say that we're going to have to look at this particular government and where the NDP's responsibility lies in this particular situation? Previous election, Mr. Speaker. Previous election. You will recall that one of the NDP promises was to go ahead and put on the streets of this province 200 more police officers — 200 more. You spread 200 people around Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, they're going to be hard to find. But it is a direction.

Now very often when the NDP make a promise, then they're elected, then they say, oh but we forgot to tell you this is going to be over the length of our reign, this will be four or five years before we put this all into place. Well, Mr. Speaker, we've waited till about the end of the time. For the NDP, these are the end times. It's about over.

Have they given us those 200 police officers, Mr. Speaker? No they haven't. Have they given us half those police officers, Mr. Speaker? No they haven't. They're still way under that. They're still way under that. They have had the opportunity, they've had the opportunity and heaven knows, Mr. Speaker, there was a definite need.

Now had they put that in place right at the start, Mr. Speaker, we might have been able to reduce, if nothing else, at least the car theft across this whole province. And it's not just unique to Regina and Saskatoon and Moose Jaw and P.A. It's unique to all of our small towns as well. In my town of under 2,000 we have probably a number of dozen cars stolen every year. Same problem. We need more people on the street.

This government promised us more. We're not asking to go ahead and have them take . . . and up their budget over what they committed. We're asking only — only, Mr. Speaker — for the very commitment that they made. We would have been happy with that one. We could have probably reduced car thefts substantially throughout the rest of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it isn't as if car thefts are the only issue that we have. We have break and entries all across this province, small towns included. We have armed theft. All you have to do is listen on your radio in the morning, any of the towns, cities, and they will probably list exactly how many were broken into, and if they weren't broken into, where there was an armed robbery that took place. That's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker. That's unfortunate. Also a substantial amount of arson, the kind of arson that involves fires in alleys, cars set on fires, car sheds in back alleys set on fires — all those sorts of things are out there. So we have that kind of a situation developing in Saskatchewan.

Now we have Bill No. 8, where this government now has the opportunity to take and revamp the whole youth justice thing. Because, Mr. Speaker, we have to make one point clear here. This is a youth justice Act. Probably the majority of these crimes are committed by youth, but let's never make the mistake of saying that all youth are involved in these activities. It is a very small percentage, a very small percentage. And

that's why it's so critical that this government finally decided to take action and say, here's a small group of young people; let's deal with that small group of young people; let's correct that. Then those individuals who unfortunately want to paint all of youth with the same brush won't be able to do that.

We also need to do that for the security of all of this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the implementation of Bill No. 8, Bill No. 8 doesn't go anywhere near doing what it should. And I think let's just follow a few things that they need to address.

I was at that meeting last winter, Mr. Speaker, that I spoke of earlier on, where the new plan came into being for the city of Regina to reduce car thefts — the plan that worked. It also happened to be interesting that's where Chris Axworthy, the then minister of Justice, had his car stolen — the same day.

So it kind of shows that the predominance of car thieves . . . Who would think that the Justice minister would have his car stolen — of all the people, the Justice minister would have his car stolen on the very day that he wants to initiate a new venture to reduce car thefts? Utter irony in that whole case. Utter irony, Mr. Speaker.

Anyway, I sat in that meeting, and what was one of the . . . what was probably the sad thing in that whole meeting . . . Most of it was very positive because they were enthused about the new venture, a venture that was going to work. However, there was a young mother there whose daughter had been involved in a car theft situation. And she spoke very earnestly to the minister and said, Mr. Minister, the work that you're doing with the young people — remember Bill No. 8 deals with youth justice. She says, you do some very silly things. And she was very irate at this point, and I don't blame her because she was concerned for her daughter's welfare.

But she says, first of all, you've taken away all the tools that I, as a parent, thought I had to deal with my youngster. And she was referring to Social Services because they were involved in that. She didn't go into any detail on what those tools were, but she was very concerned about that.

Then she said, now Social Services has basically taken over. And so my daughter's supposed to be home at 10 o'clock at night. And so what happens? Well at 10 o'clock at night her daughter gets a phone call from the Social Services department, and they ask to speak to her daughter. So her daughter goes on the phone. Hello, are you there? Yes, I'm here. Very good, just checking up. Click, down goes the phone, and out the door goes the daughter. It's bizarre. It's bizarre, Mr. Speaker.

This is the kind of system that only the NDP government could think of. And I have the Minister of Corrections, though, saying, guess what we do now? Well, I am sure he will explain this to us in boring detail the next time he has a chance to get up.

And we'll be listening for that because I hope they have a better system, a system that isn't as full of loopholes, because you have to understand that the youth of our province are an intelligent bunch. This wasn't an isolated case. This wasn't the

one youth that had an IQ (intelligence quotient) of over 190 who said, guess what, I'm getting one phone call in the evening and when it comes now I can leave. You see, I'm sure every person under the age of 18 could figure that out and probably did. And that's where some of those high numbers came from.

And Bill No. 8, I'm not sure totally if it deals with all of those, because it's going to be a very, it's going to be a very difficult situation, Mr. Speaker. It is really a fairly awesome task that this government has been entrusted with and that is to move from the situation where we were to a new system dovetailing it with the federal system. There are some opportunities there. I hope they take those opportunities to heart and use them as they could.

We've discussed specifically some common sense things that haven't been there in the past. We've talked about the need for officers. And you can't do this without people. The situation in New York that I mentioned, the broken windows concept, they put literally thousands of more people on the streets. Now the city of New York has a bigger problem than all of Saskatchewan, I would hope — not that I wish them any bad luck, but I just hope ours doesn't compare with that. But still it requires a lot more personnel doing things differently and in different ways than they have in the past.

Mr. Speaker, there is another issue that I don't think there is an answer to at this point, but it's a situation that we have to look at when we're going to deal with youth justice. If we don't deal with it we're going to have a certain segment of our youth that are going to be repeat offenders regardless of the youth administration Act and how carefully you dovetail it with the federal system. It's an area that isn't mentioned in this Bill and it's an area that the federal Bill also doesn't address. And I'm going to challenge this government — they've only introduced some half-dozen or a dozen pieces of legislation so far — to work through that and introduce at least something that starts to move in that direction.

That is, Mr. Speaker, FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) — a very serious concern in our society. Because you suddenly have one group of young people that all the things that we work at, that the federal plan plans to work at, that Bill 8 plans to work at, that we as opposition might say should or shouldn't be in there, all of those don't address this. Because you have a certain group of people who just actually can't fathom that what they do has a consequence and that consequence needs to be considered when they're going to take that particular action. That isn't there. Later on if they, you know, commit the misdeed, looking at what they've done and saying, that was awful, that was bad, I shouldn't have done that — that ability isn't there either.

So you have a group of young people in every province, and also in our province, with FAS who almost always get involved in the criminal scene. And we at this point have no adequate way to deal with them.

We could say, well let's lock them up. But it seems a very painful, shameful thing to do, to lock up people who actually have no concept of what their actions actually are and what the implications of their actions are.

I had the . . . I'm not sure if it's the fortune or misfortune, Mr.

Speaker, of attending a court situation some time ago where a young person with FAS had committed a very serious crime. This young person was brought into the courtroom. And, Mr. Speaker, I would say that every other young person in this province — every other young person in this province — who would have committed that misdeed, that crime, who would have come into that courtroom and seen the families, would have realized the hurt that they had put other people through. And there would have been a look of either shame or regret or something on their face to implicate that, man, that wasn't very smart; I probably shouldn't have done that. This young person with FAS walked in, and just grinned, and gave all of us the finger; obviously had no idea what they had done, no idea of the consequences, and no idea of the situation that this young person found themselves in now and how serious that situation was. And we need to deal with that, Mr. Speaker.

It's easy to say we can't assess it. It's easy to give all kinds of other excuses, but the reality is we have these young people in our schools, in our homes, in our communities. And in all of those areas they create difficult situations for their families, for their communities, and for their schools. And so that needs to come out somewhere as we try to dovetail this.

Now that happens to be a provincial responsibility. Rightly or wrongly it's left there because the federal government hasn't acted on it. So it must be something that we as people of this province deal with. And it's a major problem, and it's one of those things, Mr. Speaker, that we need to look at. We need to look at situations as to, do we have to lock these people up? That's not the answer. Do we have to find special places for these people to live in, where they can live there with respect but a lot of freedoms are removed? Possibly. But just to put them in a prison situation, the answer is definitely no.

(15:30)

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 8 deals with those issues and I'm really quite concerned that as we look at this dovetailing, and this is really what it is, that, number one, there's going to be an effort by this government to sort of modernize what they're doing and say, guess what? We've now taken the old system and created a new system and here it is, Bill No. 8. And yet, Mr. Speaker, that's not good enough.

I think we need to look at what the federal system has. Look at all those gaps that are there, all the opportunities. And unfortunately I would imagine government side, they won't always see this as opportunities because some of these are responsibilities that require new solutions, new thought in new areas. And if we look at how this NDP government has dealt with justice and youth in the past, there have been some new ventures, but unfortunately precious few — precious few.

That's why we are still capital of Canada and sometimes North America when it comes to certain kinds of crimes — when it comes to theft, crimes of violence, all of those sorts of things. It's still there.

So this government needs to look at a whole lot more than just Bill No. 8 and try to just say, we've generally covered this. Because what will happen is next year and the year after and the year after, governments are going to have to deal with the fact

that crime in Saskatchewan has not gone down. There is virtually nothing in Bill No. 8, Mr. Speaker, virtually nothing in Bill No. 8 that's going to actually reduce crime in Saskatchewan.

This government has basically said, what are we doing now that we have to cover off in the future? Let's do that. They haven't gone the step further to say, and what else can we do that's new? How do we have to interact with education? How do we have to interact with health? How do we have to interact with social services? All of those key things need to be worked together, Mr. Speaker.

If we continue on as the way we've done, where we go to our police forces and basically say, you're supposed to be the people who enforce the crime; you're supposed to be the people that go ahead and find the individuals; you're supposed to bring them to justice; at the same time you're supposed to be their parent and counsellor. It's very difficult, Mr. Speaker, for the officer who has to grab a young person by the back of the neck and say, I'm taking you to justice, at the same time saying, and now I want to sit beside you and help you to turn out to be a good, contributing person of society. That's a difficult situation. Bill No. 8 doesn't address the need for those changes in our justice system in this particular province, Mr. Speaker.

We have done some checking with some of the groups across this province and, as I've already intimated, this is a very large area. This may actually be the most significant Bill that this government's going to present this year and so we will be checking with all of the groups that have a stake in this.

And we will be debating this much more in this House, Mr. Speaker, hoping that the government will in the future, and maybe even later on in this particular session, bring forth some other pieces of legislation to go ahead and deal with those areas that aren't dealt with in Bill No. 8. And so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 5

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Junor that **Bill No. 5 — The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very pleased today to rise and speak to The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Bill. I know that everyone around the province breathed a sigh of relief last September when there was an agreement, a collective agreement between the teachers and this province, agreeing that we would actually have no strike and that they would have an opportunity to have our children return to the classroom.

I congratulate the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) and the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation) in ensuring that this collective agreement did happen. And I know that right around this province we know that growing our population and ensuring that our children have a bright future is relying on the educators in the province.

As the Saskatchewan Party, we recognize the value of our teachers and recognize that we . . . the need for their input and their value they have in our children's lives.

The teachers and the parents and the children in Saskatchewan know that the unfunded pension liability that is part of the debt of this province has got nothing to do with this latest negotiated agreement. They do know that the \$4 billion that is unfunded pension liability debt, that is growing right now, is something that they're going to have to be dealing with.

But this current Bill is something that was agreed to by all the participants at the table and there was four issues that were dealt with directly.

The first one was the periods of disability for teachers who experience long-term disability. This is going to allow them now to have their pensions calculated in the same ways as it would have been if they would have been able to teach during their disability. Through no fault of their own, many teachers are having to leave the classroom, and then they would retire at the age of 65 without having the same pension that they would have had, had they had the opportunity to continue teaching.

So through this Bill and through these changes in the collective agreement, they're going to be able to contribute to their pension.

Another one of the changes is regarding the parenting leave that teachers can purchase for their pensions under The Labour Standards Act. We know that there was changes under this Act, and the actual principles under the old agreement didn't jive with the provisions of The Labour Standards Act, so part of the collective agreement was actually these agreements to work together. And now the teachers have the same benefits as other people under The Labour Standards Act.

There's a number of teachers who actually have had to move their pension from another province, if they decided to go teaching elsewhere and then come back to Saskatchewan, and there was always some problems with moving the pension back and forth. And now with the changes to this Act, they've removed some of the financial barriers and there will be not the same problems that there was before.

The fourth and probably one of the more important issues is eliminating the need to publish the names of the plan members who actually died during the last year or their age or their reason for superannuation. The freedom of information and privacy Act actually made this important. And we knew that there was some inconsistencies with this Act. So the changes that were allowed during this disability pensions Act make this all possible.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's some questions that I do have on this Bill — conditions on transferring pensions, some of the administrative issues that were talked about in the Act, and whether these amendments will actually encourage teachers to stay in this province? These are all questions that we will want to discuss with the minister but this can be done within Committee of the Whole so I move that this Bill now move to Committee of the Whole.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Vote 53

Subvote (SP01)

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

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for the opportunity to introduce to you and members of the committee the five officials from Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation who are here with me today.

First of all on my left, Mr. Ray Clayton, who is the president; Garth Rusconi, immediately behind me, who is the vice-president of accommodation services; Donald Koop, vice-president of commercial services; Debbie Koshman, vice-president of corporate services; and seated behind Debbie is Paul Radigan, director of financial services, Mr. Chairman.

And if I may continue just for a moment, Mr. Chairman, what I would like to do is to thank them very much for being here for the benefit of the committee today. And just to offer a few comments in advance and invite the questions from committee members.

Mr. Chairman, the corporation services include, and I just want to outline some of the services that are provided by SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation). That includes property management, facility operations, purchasing services, warehousing, supply distribution, and transportation services. SPMC, Mr. Chairman, provides these services throughout Saskatchewan to more than 200 communities.

As a support service, SPMC works hard to ensure that other government departments and agencies are well supported in their efforts to serve the people of this great province of Saskatchewan.

As an example, Mr. Chairman, SPMC's central vehicle agency saves government approximately \$3 million every year through its bulk discounts. SPMC also saves another \$5 million a year on long distance and voice services for government, as well as another \$1 million a year on cellular services.

And, Mr. Chairman, it doesn't stop there. SPMC provides additional savings of approximately \$3 million every year by making centralized purchases of the goods and services that government departments and agencies need to operate.

And SPMC does more than save money for this government, Mr. Chairman. This past year SPMC unveiled an action plan on procurement design to make it easier for Saskatchewan suppliers to do business with the public sector agencies.

As part of an action plan on procurement, SPMC issued a discussion paper last December. This discussion paper was

designed to stimulate discussion about current procurement policies as well as to seek input on anticipated opportunities in government procurement.

As part of its efforts of support for the Saskatchewan supplier community, SPMC held a one-day purchasers' showcase in Saskatoon this January.

An Hon. Member: — You'd be better off answering questions . . .

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Absolutely. I'm looking forward to answering the committee's questions, Mr. Chairman. I just want to make sure that they do have an appreciation of the hard work that people in SPMC do behalf . . . on them, on the services that people provide to this province, and that this government through SPMC provides to all the communities.

The showcase that I had mentioned, Mr. Chairman, was attended by more than 700 people, representing over 450 businesses, Mr. Chairman. This event was a huge success.

And I'm sorry if I'm saying so much good news, it's upsetting other committee members in the House, Mr. Chairman.

(15:45)

The one-day event, I need to tell you though, made it an awful lot easier for Saskatchewan suppliers — Saskatchewan suppliers — to make contact with a broad spectrum of public sector agencies which is important. This is supporting our businesses, our communities, throughout the province.

In February, SPMC launched a new Web site called sasktenders.ca. This Web site, and the members of the committee on the opposite side of the House should take note of this because it provides free and simple access to Saskatchewan public sector tenders, and as such responds to suppliers' concerns about the expense of using the national electronic alternative.

The action plan on procurement is making it easier for Saskatchewan suppliers to do business with government, Mr. Chairman. So that's something that SPMC should be and is very, very proud of.

SPMC is also very proud of its air transportation service, Mr. Chairman. This service includes executive air which helps members from both sides of this House travel this vast and beautiful province of ours safely and conveniently. SPMC's transportation service also includes air ambulance service, which is run in collaboration with the Department of Health and the Saskatoon Health District. Mr. Chairman, when someone in this province urgently requires care not available in their home community, air ambulance is there to take them where the care can be provided.

SPMC provides important services to this province, Mr. Chairman. It is my hope at this point, on this occasion, that I will be able to expand further on these particular issues today, Mr. Chairman, as we respond to questions from members of this committee.

Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and on behalf of the opposition we want to welcome the officials from SPMC here today for questions in Committee of Finance, and I thank them for their time and for their effort here this afternoon. And, Mr. Chairman, I'll just at the outset indicate that I will be, with the help of the pages, sending over the globals for SPMC and getting into some specific questions.

But before I do that, my colleague, the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, has some specific questions so I'll defer to her and then be able to return to some questions that I have for the minister and the officials. Go ahead.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Minister, I have a few questions around the whole issue of the Souris Valley Hospital in Weyburn. I have questioned in this House several times about this facility and I wonder if you could provide me with an update of the status today.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the question from the member of Weyburn-Big Muddy. That particular facility . . . There have been agencies — government agencies — canvassed for use of that facility, and we found nobody that is interested.

Now there has been a new facility announced by the Department of Health, as the member would be well aware. So now we are still in the process of dealing with the city of Weyburn to determine whether or not they may be able to come up with some ideas or some uses for that particular facility. And that's where it's at right now, and we'll work with them in whatever endeavours or efforts to find a suitable tenant, if in fact someone comes along and sees there may be a use for it. But at this point in time, the city of Weyburn is involved in that looking for perhaps a tenant and sub-use of that building.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, some time ago I met with officials from SPMC with some other residents of Weyburn who had an idea for use for Souris Valley, and who were very concerned because there was talk at that time of it being . . . the main use, which is the long-term care facility, moving out of there. And I was told at that time that there was an extensive package that had been put together by SPMC that was given out to prospective clients that might want to purchase Souris Valley. Following that, I received a two-pager which actually held no information that would be of any value to someone wanting to purchase this facility.

I'm wondering if today if SPMC has a package that they actually can give out to people or parties that are interested in purchasing the Souris Valley facility.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Chairman, I wonder if the member could clarify. What you're looking for is the specifications and what the facility entails and . . . I'm just not sure exactly what kind of a package you were hoping to have sent out or put together.

Ms. Bakken: — Well, Mr. Minister, it was not my package. It was SPMC's package. And I was told at the time of this meeting that there was a package that was available to be sent

out to interested parties should they inquire about using Souris Valley and possibly purchasing Souris Valley.

I would like to know if that package was ever put together, and if it was, what it contained.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, the member is correct with respect to a package being available for interested parties. But we're a little ahead of where that . . . at that stage that it should be at. There is an order of priority with respect to disposal of properties by SPMC.

First of all, it's offered up to and looked at by provincial Crown corporations, independent government agencies as well, health districts, and some of the . . . or whichever of the non-government organizations that provide core government services.

Now secondly, it's offered up to local government organizations such as municipal governments, school districts, or pardon me, school boards, and universities to see whether or not they have any use for it.

And thirdly, and then this is . . . I know that it may seem like an arduous process but it's a process that's been in place with some long-term mutual agreements to afford the opportunities to government agencies that may have use of it. So thirdly I'm at the federal-funded organizations such as federal departments, agencies, Crowns, corporations, and treaty land entitlement and specific claim bands.

Then fourthly, there's another step. So it's not a real quick process but it's one that we're committed to following. If an interest to purchase that property as its determined . . . at its determined market value is obtained from step three, then SPMC proceeds with the necessary negotiations and documentation to conclude the sale on the transaction. So it would be at that stage when there would be someone then finally coming to us and saying, there's an interest; we have an interest; this is what we'd need it for.

Now fifthly — and this is where the package, the total package would come in — if there is no expressed interest to purchase the property at the determined market value from step three, then the surplus property is offered to the general public through a public call for proposals. So it may seem like a lengthy procedure to go through but it does in fact afford opportunities for publicly supported agencies, school boards, and non-government organizations to make application for those properties.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I think there is a lot of confusion around this whole issue because it was over a year ago that I actually met with SPMC and was told at that time that there was a package that was available should interested parties ask about Souris Valley hospital. And just a few moments ago you told me that you had turned this over to the city of Weyburn. Is the city of Weyburn trying to find a use for . . . someone in the public to use it or are they trying to find a use for it for . . . through the city of Weyburn? I'm a little bit confused here.

It is a large facility and I am sure that the city of Weyburn is not

in a position to be taken . . . taking over Souris Valley for the use by the city of Weyburn. So I would like to know: which is it? Is the city of Weyburn supposed to be finding a use within the city for it, or are they supposed to be finding a buyer for this facility?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, yes, it is confusing and some of these tendering processes and disposal, not unlike some of our procurement services and policies and procedures that need to be followed are . . . perhaps need to be more . . . we need to sit down face to face and go over it and make sure that we understand exactly what happens. And I apologize for any confusion.

We're at the stage where the facility, as I mentioned in the second step of the process, is to offer it to local government organizations such as municipal governments, school boards, and university. So if the city in fact wanted to buy it, okay, that's a step. It's offered to them — either take over the facility through a purchase offer and then sell it or utilize it for . . . offer it to other agencies, non-government or otherwise.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I'm still not clear, Mr. Minister, whether you are trying to get the city of Weyburn to purchase this for a use within the city or whether you are asking the city of Weyburn to find someone else outside of the municipal jurisdiction to buy it.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, we're not . . . If the city has a use for it, if they see that they can fulfill its use and they want it, that's fine. If they say no, we're not interested, we don't have anybody we can offer it to, we don't want to buy it — then we go down to the next step on the list or the procedures and it's then offered to federally funded organizations, federal department services, the treaty land entitlement people, and the ones that I mentioned earlier.

So we're at the stage . . . If the city of Weyburn comes back and says, look, get rid of that, we're not interested in that property — then we go to the next group of federally funded agencies that may be interested in going after that property.

And I think it's fair that we give the city of Weyburn the opportunity to make an offer on that facility, maybe in conjunction with some other community organizations that may get together with the city and say, perhaps together we can purchase this and build it into something that . . . for our community needs.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So it's my understanding, and please clarify if I'm wrong, but that the proposal now is that the city of Weyburn will find a use for it by the city. And should they not want to use it in the city . . . or by the city of Weyburn, then they are turning it back to you, SPMC, to find a use for it? Am I correct?

The city's only role in this is if they find a use for it, by actually the city of Weyburn?

(16:00)

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, to the member. We offered it to the city for them to determine whether they have any use

for it or not. We're not suggesting that they take it over and try to sell it or offer it up for rent to anybody else.

The question to them is now: the facility's there; do you feel you can make use of it or not? If not, then we go to the next level of agencies, the federally funded agencies, and offer it to them.

If the city of Weyburn turned around and said no, we have no use for that building, we can't afford it, we don't want it — then we go to the next step and deal with the federally funded organizations, those that I'd mentioned earlier.

So it's not trying to impose anything on the city of Weyburn. It's saying, we have this building, it's not being utilized — are you interested in a purchase for whatever use your community might have for it? And if the city of Weyburn says no, not interested, then we'll go to the federal government agencies.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I was not implying that you were imposing anything on the city. I am just trying to clarify what actually the purpose of the committee is that has been set up in the city of Weyburn. If it is strictly for the city — which I believe you've indicated — for the city to find a use within the city for, it is not for a commercial entity.

If they do not find a purpose for it within their municipal government, then it will revert to you, and SPMC will move on to the next step, and they will be responsible to try and find a use then at the federal government level. Am I correct?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — To the member, Mr. Chairman, that's absolutely correct, and I apologize for having indicated or suggested that it was an imposition on the city. That was a poor choice of words and I didn't mean it to sound that way.

It was meant to suggest that the city has the first shot at it. But I believe you've clarified and just exactly the steps . . . the next step now.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I guess the reason that I'm asking these questions is because there is a lot of concern in the city of Weyburn around the whole use of Souris Valley. It is a very historic building. It has a lot of meaning in our community. People are very concerned about the whole . . . all the events of the past few years and all the uncertainty which has surrounded it.

There was great concern when the health district decided to turn Souris Valley . . . to close Souris Valley and to move out of that facility. And at that time there was felt that there was not clear enough communication with SPMC on what was transpiring, especially with the residents of Elgin Street who were directly impacted because of the things that were happening around Souris Valley in the grounds, and the concern about where they were taking down . . . SPMC removed trees, they're going to build a pond, and so on. And there were a lot of concerns, and the people — the residents of Weyburn — a lot of them did not feel that their concerns were adequately addressed by SPMC.

And now we're in a situation where we could lose the whole facility. And the facility not only houses long-term care but it also houses the Family Place, Mini Go School, Violence

Intervention, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and so on.

And when . . . Because the long-term care component is the main tenant of the facility, there is great concern that these other entities will be . . . then have to move out of the facility because they will not be able to operate and pay for the ongoing utilities which are now paid for by the Sun Health District.

And so, Mr. Minister, that is why people want to be clear in their minds, in the community of Weyburn, how they are going to have the opportunity to play a part in what actually happens to this facility. Will they have an opportunity to say no, we do not want this building demolished?

And that is the great fear because I have a communication from Lloyd Searcy, who is the vice-president of operations of the new facility in Weyburn, and this is dated May 28, 2001. This is almost two years ago, and at that time he is giving an update about Tatagwa View. And his fifth point on this — and this is a memo to the staff at South Central Health District. And his fifth point is, because the northwest wing, referring to the Souris Valley facility . . . wing will eventually be demolished, I asked Don Rose, who is one of the employees at Souris Valley, to acquire a number of bricks from this wing for testing, which he got from the old library building. If they are found to be suitable, they will be used in construction of the new building.

Now if there is no plan to demolish this building and the people of Weyburn and community are going to have a say in what actually eventually happens to this building, why is the vice-president of operations and finance putting forth letters saying that the northwest wing is going to be demolished?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate the concerns that the member is expressing on behalf of the community of Weyburn. There are some other concerns and the member has alluded to them as well. It's who is financing and who is paying for the costs of maintaining that facility, and I believe the member said it was the Sun Health District?

Okay, and it does require considerable amount of funding, of monies, for upgrading. I understand. Now that's one of the . . . The hope is that the building is not needed to be demolished and that's why these steps, these procedures are being followed, to see if someone in this chain of interested parties perhaps may come forward and say we'll take on the responsibility of that facility. We'll invest whatever — whether it's hundreds of thousands or millions of dollars — to upgrade it. And hopefully, we're hoping that that would happen. Because you're right; it is a building that's been around for many, many years.

So it's not the intent . . . The preference would be to not have to demolish the building. Now the letter that the member refers to, I believe if I'm correct, it came from the health district, an employee of the health district. So it had nothing to do with SPMC and perhaps, with all due respect to the letter writer, it may have been that the bricks look great on this facility. If in fact the time comes when there's no alternative but to take the building down, perhaps we can prudently recover, retrieve some of the bricks that make up that building and utilize it for another building or for a new facility.

So I just . . . I want to make sure that the community of

Weyburn and the member, Mr. Chair, understands that nobody is rushing forward to tear down that building and we'd all like to see it taken on by someone that would be prepared to maintain the upkeep and any modifications or any upgrades. And from what I understand — and the member is probably better acquainted than I am; and I have visited that facility by the way — and it would need a significant amount of dollars for upgrading it and bringing it up to the kind of standards that would be required for continuing and offering some of the services. And I don't think the member will disagree with me on that.

So it's not a matter of trying to shovel it off on somebody, not by any stretch. And going through this process, perhaps along the way, perhaps there may be a federal government agency that will come along and say, by golly we can make use of that facility and we are prepared to invest whatever.

But we're looking at the alternatives with the hopes that perhaps it might not have to be taken down.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I guess what I'm hearing from you today is that there is not a firm commitment by this government not to demolish it if it comes to that.

I guess the people of Weyburn, and I have to concur with them, are concerned because it has been known for several years that the Sun Country Health District was planning to move out of that facility. And it goes back to my original question: where is the package? There has not been, to my knowledge, any concerted effort to find a use for Souris Valley.

We are now in the situation where the new facility . . . they have already removed trees on the grounds and have prepared the site and are moving towards starting construction. And yet we're back at what? Number two on the list of what we should do with this facility. And this has been common knowledge in the health field and with SPMC for years that this was going to happen and that the health district was moving towards this and moving out of Souris Valley. And yet there has been nothing done in order to prepare for that day.

And it is my understanding from speaking with people that work at Souris Valley and are directly engaged in the day-to-day maintenance of that facility, that it has been left to deteriorate and that it has not been kept up. And that is an absolute crime when you think of that facility.

And I know several years ago when I was on the board at the Union Hospital, which was called the Union Hospital at that time, and we were looking at a way to utilize the health care facilities in the Weyburn . . . in the city of Weyburn, that we had a study done of Souris Valley and it showed clearly that the structure was sound and that that building would be standing long after many of the other buildings that were newer in the city of Weyburn.

And so the abdication of maintaining that building is simply not acceptable. And now we're faced today with a . . . in a situation where we could possibly lose that facility.

And so I want to know where this package is, and what is going

to happen by SPMC to move forward on this? This committee has been struck in the city of Weyburn. I would like to know what the terms of reference are for that committee. Do you have terms of reference for them?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Chairman, we would not . . . it would not be SPMC that would be responsible for making up the terms of reference for that committee. And I have . . . we're part of the committee. SPMC is part of the public committee that's been formed to explore the options for this particular facility.

And I . . . until it was officially announced that there would be a new facility, SPMC was not in a position to proceed with this process that we're into now. It would not have been fair to look at options for a facility before, in fact, it was formally announced that there would be a facility to replace that.

So the partners within this committee, I'm told, are the Department of Health, the Sun Country Health Region, the Department of Industry and Resources, the city of Weyburn, the RM of Weyburn, and the community at large.

And the total goal of that particular committee, whatever their terms of reference may be that they've agreed upon, is to find a viable alternative use for this facility.

And as I mentioned earlier, the maintenance, upkeep, and upgrading — and I know what the member's saying — we should be preserving our heritage property. I don't think anybody disagrees with that. But there are communities, and I'm aware, very well aware of at least one where facilities that have served their purpose and have been utilized for care needs have arrived at the point — because of new technology, new requirements — that those facilities are no longer suitable for the purposes that they served over the years.

(16:15)

So it's a matter of now what do you do? Do you rebuild, do you build something, or do you upgrade? And if you compare the costs of one against the other and then some pretty tough decisions have to be made.

But getting back to the process for viable alternatives for utilizing the building, I do believe, I do believe . . . and I can't think of who would argue with property that's being . . . that SPMC is responsible for, going through a process which allows or affords opportunities, as I mention in this list through these five steps — provinces, agencies, the community — to come up with a viable alternative.

There are costs of upkeep. There's costs of maintenance, and I know the member will understand that. And those costs would be the Sun Valley Health District that is responsible for that. So it's not as if that particular building is being totally ignored in that respect. It's a matter of the facility, to serve the needs of people in that community, will be replaced with a new facility.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well there's been a whole discussion around the new facility and the needs. And I've made my position on that very clear over the last few years about the irresponsibility of moving out of this facility in the

first place and spending some \$20 million to have less beds and less staff in the city of Weyburn. But that's a whole other issue that deals more directly with Health and not with SPMC.

But, Mr. Minister, I would like to ask you then, it is my understanding that SPMC has turned this responsibility over to the city of Weyburn of which they serve a part of this committee. However, there is no terms of reference. You're telling me that you do not have a package that the city can even sell to anyone.

Do you have a time frame when the city . . . the committee that's formed in the city of Weyburn is to come back with a response? Do you have a cost that you have attached to Souris Valley? Do you have criteria around what SPMC will sign-off on? What are the terms of reference? What criteria have you given this committee? They can't just be told to form a committee with no guidelines. I want to know what the guidelines are.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Not unlike what we talked about earlier about being somewhat confusing, and I perhaps . . . And I apologize if my answers are causing more confusion on this process.

The committee has been struck and I'm told that it's only met perhaps once or twice and has not indicated any specific terms of reference. But now let's . . . I don't want to confuse this issue any further than perhaps I may already have. That committee has been struck and perhaps in advance of our having completed the five steps that we need to go through — that I alluded to or indicated earlier — offering first to provincial Crowns or provincial agencies, local government organizations such as municipal governments, federal-funded organizations, and if an interest to purchase is determined or obtained from step three, then SPMC proceeds with the necessary documents and so on.

Now the . . . We haven't got to that stage yet and we haven't completed all those steps. So although the committee is together and looking at possibilities for community use based on the size of that facility, what upgrades will be required and so on, when all our commitments have been met, when SPMC's commitments have been met to that five-step process in offering to all others before it's marketed, it'll be . . . the committee will then come up with a plan, with SPMC's involvement, to form a marketing strategy to dispose of that facility.

But initially they have the option of seeking out an organization — a non-government organization or an agency within the community — that may want to purchase the building. If that comes to pass, if an interest to purchase that property is determined and its market value is obtained, then SPMC will proceed through the necessary negotiations and documentations. This includes the sale transaction.

Again, and it's still . . . no decisions on any demolition of that building is being considered or undertaken until, and hopefully won't have to come to that because perhaps by following these steps, somewhere along the way there will be a use or a buyer that will come forward and will utilize that building.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I guess I find it somewhat strange that SPMC owns this facility. They have struck a committee in the community of Weyburn which is good and fine, but I think it's a little strange to me that the buyer, so to speak, is forming the terms of reference, as opposed to the seller.

Surely the government has put together a plan of what they want for this facility, the time frame around when the committee in Weyburn has to determine whether they have a use for it or not, and they actually have a package that they put together for the city of Weyburn to make that determination in consultation with community groups, whether they want to move forward.

This is all . . . There doesn't seem to be any thought behind this or anything put in place. And this is the whole concern, is that are the people in Weyburn going to wake up some day and the wrecking ball is going to be at Souris Valley, just the same as it was tearing down the trees to put the site in place for the new facility?

The people of the city of Weyburn were told that there would be a certain process before the trees were cut down at Souris Valley. I don't believe that process was actually followed to the letter. And that is why there is great concern in the community of Weyburn that the same thing is going to happen with Souris Valley, and especially in light of the fact that I have this letter from Lloyd Searcy stating that the northwest wing will be demolished.

Now who is making these decisions and who is going to have the eventual say? And how are the community of Weyburn going to have an opportunity to play a part in the final decision and how much time are they going to be given if a use is not found through the processes that you have outlined? When are they going to be informed that you, as SPMC, have not been able to find a use, and that they are going to have an opportunity to find a use for Souris Valley?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, the . . . and I don't think it would be fair to put any artificial deadlines on this process. We have concerns for the heritage building.

But you know what surprises me somewhat, Mr. Chairman, is the member from Weyburn-Big Muddy who is . . . sounds to me like opposed, opposed to a new health care facility in that city.

I know other communities that would welcome new facilities to care for people requiring health care, so I'm a little confused here. We're trying to do our best, the best we can. There are serious costs involved. Renovations. There's a new facility being planned.

The letter you keep referring to did not come from SPMC; did not. And I expect . . . and I don't know what the contents of the letter are or what the insinuation might be, but is it that if that north wing is demolished or when that north wing is demolished and we find out that those bricks can be used for another building, we want them? Is that the case? Because there's no direction, there's no indication here until we follow the process, that any action will be taken with that facility.

We share the concerns of the people in that community about the heritage site and the facility itself. But at some point, as I mentioned earlier, there are considerations that need to be taken to ensure the care of people that require the type of care that they need in this day and age.

So I'm not sure what more we can do. This process . . . and I'm not sure how much further it should go or what the member suggests should be done. Really, I would appreciate any suggestions or ideas as to what should happen. The community is involved — with the leaders of the community, the RMs, the city; we've got the health district; we've got people in the Health department . . . and I'm sure they sit down and think, look, if we can find a use for this facility, let's see if we can find it.

Now, yes, we might be able to find a use for it but guess what? If we're going to continue using it, you know what we're going to need to spend — I don't know — 10, 20, 30, \$40 million to make sure that it's upgraded to the safety standards and meet all the requirements, whatever they might be, to meet all the standards that are set for accommodating people who require it for health care.

So I really don't know, but I would invite the member to send over some suggestions as to what further should be done in this process, that attempts to address perhaps needs of all agencies, and without having to, as the member put it, put a wrecking ball to that facility.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well, Mr. Minister, I guess there has been a misunderstanding around this whole committee, because my understanding was it was to find not only possibly a use for the community but possibly to find a commercial use for the facility.

And what I would like clarified is, is the time frame, and to know — so the people of Weyburn know — when their opportunity to play a part in this is, and how much time they will have when SPMC has made a decision. If that decision is that they have not found a use for it, how much time that the citizens of Weyburn will then have to find a use for it if they so choose?

Mr. Minister, you have indicated that there is a cost to operating this facility and that's why we're very concerned and want to find an anchor for this facility so that we can maintain the other services that are utilizing the facility now. And I have to say that to their credit the people in Weyburn, which are made up of mostly volunteers that initiated the Mini Go school and the Family Place, went into Souris Valley into wings that did need some renovation and fixing up, and through volunteer labour and donations from the community, they went in there and they re-did those wings and they put them into a very . . . into use, and are serving a great need in our community.

(16:30)

And it would be most devastating to these community organizations and to the children that they serve if they have to close. And that is what this is all about, is trying to understand clearly the process that is taking place so that we are not faced with the issue of this building have to be closed, and when the

Sun Country health district actually moves out that there is someone to come in and take their place and to be the anchor so that these other community organizations do not have to be removed from Souris Valley.

And so I would appreciate, on behalf of the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, a time frame set out by yourself so that the people of Weyburn are clear in their mind what the process is and what part that they can play in resolving this factor.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, to the member, sincerely, I do not believe, I do not believe it would be fair, in all fairness to all these people and the community of Weyburn, to set a time frame and say if you . . . something doesn't happen, somebody doesn't show up for the next six months, we're out of there. I don't think that'd be fair.

What we want to do is make sure we go through this entire process and allow as much opportunity as possible to afford the community, to afford other agencies, to afford whomever, the opportunity to come in and when the time comes for the move to be made, that there will be somebody. So I . . . please accept the fact that, in all fairness, I do not believe it would be appropriate to say, you're out of here in one year whether you do anything with it or not. We don't want to do that.

We want to make sure that our process is followed, that the community's given opportunities, and if it . . . And when the time comes, the community may very well become involved and likely will become involved through the public committee to determine what other course of action, perhaps become involved in a marketing strategy and hopefully look for people that would occupy it, would buy it, occupy it, refurbish it, or do whatever. But our hope is the same as yours — to not have to take down that facility.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That's, you know, understandable that you do not want to rush the process. However we are in a time frame because the Sun Country Health District is moving forward. They are planning to start construction this spring. I believe that they're looking at a year to 18 months in order to construct and be moving into their new facility. So whether we like it or you like it or not, we are in a time frame.

And once the Sun Country Health District moves long-term care out of Souris Valley facility, there will not be an anchor unless we find someone to replace them. So we cannot say that we don't want to have a time frame around this because there is one already imposed on us.

And so I would ask you, Mr. Minister, again could you please clearly outline — and I'm not asking for you to do that today — but could you outline for me something that I could give back to the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy to say, this is the process; these are the time frames; this is how you as a constituent of this community can have a part in this and will have an opportunity to find a solution to this problem? Could I ask you to do that, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, what I will commit to the member is to prepare documentation. And forgive me, once again, I will not — will not — give any artificial deadlines as

far as that facility is concerned. And I would hope that you would not expect anybody to do that. We're going to do everything we possibly can by following this process to see if we can't come up with someone to occupy that facility.

But what I will commit is for an explanation perhaps that may be of assistance for the processes that are in place and what we will endeavour to engage . . . well not engage, but that we will implement to make sure we do everything we possibly can to help the community find someone to occupy that facility. And if that's acceptable, then I will . . . we'll get some correspondence to you next week to outline what the processes are, and it might make it a little clearer.

And if we outline exactly the different agencies and the processes that we hope maybe somewhere along this way, you know, who knows? Somebody may come along and find good use for that facility and will serve, as the member mentioned, as an anchor for that community . . . for that facility.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Some questions with respect to the accommodation services part of Property Management to begin with, if I may, Minister. And specifically the question has to do with the property that I would assume that SPMC is managing at 800 Central Avenue in Prince Albert. And I guess that's the McIntosh Mall there.

I'm wondering if you could comment please and provide some detail as to the planning that's underway currently in the department with respect to that space and any other space in that community currently being managed by SPMC and rented out to various departments, vis-à-vis the forestry centre that has been announced in the Throne Speech and then again in the budget.

Specifically, what arms of the government will be — if any — what offices of the government in Prince Albert are potentially relocating from SPMC properties to the forestry centre? And also while you're on your feet, Minister, if you don't mind, if you could confirm that the corporation, SPMC, will not be involved in property management for the forestry centre but rather that's somehow a part of the research centre or research park process which is under CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan).

If you could comment on those matters, please, Minister.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — I thank the member from Swift Current for that question. With respect to the McIntosh Mall in Prince Albert, SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) will be vacating approximately . . . well about one floor of that facility, and they will be moving to the forestry building. Every effort will be made, as is in other vacant spaces, to backfill, to offer it, to market it or again, a whole host of other agencies or entities that might want to avail themselves of some fairly good space.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Minister. What's the current occupancy then of that location, of that property — 800 Central Avenue, Prince Albert? What's the current occupancy or I guess the current vacancy? Either way we get to the same answer.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, in answer to that question

— and there's some of these figures that I don't have readily available but I will definitely supply to the member — the vacant lease . . . the vacant space currently is 305 square metres — 305.14.

Mr. Wall: — And other than . . . My wife's from Prince Albert so I've driven by the McIntosh Mall but I don't . . . I wonder if you . . . I'm not sure how many total square metres it would be, just by driving by it. So if you have an estimate on that so we could figure out a percentage.

Hon. Mr. Osika: — I'm like you and I would hate to take a guess and I apologize for not having that here. But I will, I will get that information to you as quickly as possible.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Minister. I wonder if you could also answer or provide a response as to whether or not, are there any other properties in Prince Albert then the corporation manages and . . . owns and manages, whose tenants may also be relocating to the forestry centre?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — The other buildings that are managed by SPMC, Highways and land titles, and none of those people have been indicated as moving anywhere. So it's the Mac Mall and those two facilities.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Then the space that is currently vacant — the 305-point-something square metres there — and the space that will be vacated sometime in the future as SERM or as the Environment department moves into the forestry centre, you indicated in your answer a couple of responses ago, I think, that SPMC will then look to fill that, obviously, will look to fill that space. And what's the policy that . . . What's SPMC's policy with respect to that? How do they . . . How aggressively are non-government, NGOs (non-governmental organization), or the private sector pursued to rent space in those facilities?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, to the member, what one thing that SPMC will not do with any of their facilities is compete with the private sector in offering space for rent to non-government agencies. But I believe we can take comfort in the fact that given the growth opportunities and the positive activities that are ongoing and being created in this province, and particularly in the northern part of the province, there may be opportunities for federal agencies, governments, other office space that will be required by folks who are taking advantage of the opportunities that are afforded here in Saskatchewan.

So as times evolves, it never ceases to amaze me when you drive into some of our cities and whether it's our major cities or some of the smaller ones that you keep wondering where the people keep coming from when they say, well our population is lessening and all you see is new homes being built and built and new buildings and all kinds of businesses. So I guess I'm being hopeful that we will be able to accommodate people in those vacant spaces.

(16:45)

Mr. Wall: — Well you know, I want to encourage the minister to keep hoping because I think there is reason to hope. There's an election just around the corner. There may be a change, and

then I think that growth that you're talking about is really going to, really going to take off. So I think your hope is well placed.

But I do have another question with respect to this issue here. So I understand . . . My limited understanding of the forestry centre is obviously it's going to do much more than be an office space, an office location, at least on the face of it. And so . . . But in light of the fact that one of your major . . . one of Property Management Corporation's major tenants, I would assume, in the McIntosh Mall is being attracted to that new facility, was SPMC consulted then by whatever agency it was, whether it's Industry and Resources, or CIC through the research parks? Was SPMC consulted as to the need for the space centre, the new centre would be providing or consulted in any way on the forestry centre development in Prince Albert?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — The answer to the member's question, Mr. Chairman, is yes. The SPMC was consulted, was asked about the space that was occupied by SERM and the cost of that leased space. So there was some consultation in advance.

Mr. Wall: — And did SPMC express then any concerns about the loss of this major tenant in the McIntosh Mall?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well the way I guess I can respond is sure there's always concern when you, as a landlord, lose tenants. There's the loss of the rental payments and perhaps the need for redecorating. However, having said that, there was also some fairly good optimism that that space, that particular space, could be backfilled. So although that happens, that's progress, and I believe that's taken into account.

And surely you don't like to see somebody leave your accommodation, your space, but in this case . . . and as SPMC continues to be confident that they are able, we are able to backfill those facilities because of its location and because of the square footage that's available or the square metres or whatever they refer to it. So yes, there's always concern, but there's always the promise of being able to fulfill the needs of others that may need that kind of accommodation.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Minister. I want to move on here to the issue of maintenance. But just before I do that, if you wouldn't mind providing — when you provide the information or when officials are providing information with respect to the total square metres or square footage actually if that's possible, but I guess we could do the conversion easily enough — but the total square metres . . . if they might also provide the total and number of square metres currently occupied by SERM that will be vacated. I think you mentioned — and if you didn't, I apologize, I don't want to put words in — but I think you mentioned a floor, they're on one floor or . . . either way though if you would just provide those, I sure would appreciate that, Minister.

And then to move on a little bit to maintenance. And I'm relatively new in these critic duties and my colleague, the late Rudi Peters, did a lot of work in this area but my learning curve is fairly steep. So I have some basic questions that maybe we could start into now. We're running a little bit short on time but they relate to maintenance in the major facilities in all the centres across the province and the practices of the corporation with respect to maintenance.

And I guess the first question is, I'm given to understand that most of the major facilities, most of the major properties that have their own SPMC full-time equivalents who are involved in maintenance — and if that's not correct, by all means correct me, but you can correct me — but, Minister, I wonder if you could confirm that? And also then if you could confirm what is the policy with respect to contracting out the maintenance work that's required — whether it's electrical, mechanical, whatever it happens to be — in the properties that SPMC owns and operates across the province?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, could I just clarify, is that . . . when you refer to maintenance — there's a whole host of maintenance areas — specifically?

Mr. Wall: — Let's just stick with — I mean for the sake of the discussions we can move it along — let's stick with electrical and mechanical, and not necessarily, not necessarily sort of the janitorial services or anything like that.

But when you have a problem in a property and you have to address some mechanical difficulty or some electrical work needs to be done or perhaps some structural work needs to be done to maintain a property, what is the, what's the policy there with respect to in-house FTEs (full-time equivalents) or contracting out?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — As the member will appreciate, Mr. Chairman, there is . . . there would be constantly — whether it SPMC or privately owned buildings — you would have a small maintenance staff and we do have. SPMC does have maintenance staff that may change light bulbs and do some of the minor fixings, if you wish.

But if there are major problems, mechanical problems, then those jobs are tendered out. Those are contracted out to — whether it's electrical, plumbing or whatever it may be — so the major, any major problems are contracted out.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Minister, and would you . . . if you could give members of the committee some assurance then that under no circumstance does . . . do these, do the maintenance people at SPMC have on staff, under no circumstance do they in fact contract — not themselves but the corporation — offer their services out to other non-government organizations in terms of maintenance in the area that we're talking about right now?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, if the occasion ever arose where perhaps the federal government occupying a facility owned by SPMC, there may be some contractual obligations. But those would be rare to, in fact, respond to some needs of a tenant, for example.

And I'm not exactly sure to what extent that the member is referring to as far as contracting out. There would be no significant SPMC employees that would be contracted out to do work for other people. And perhaps I'm confusing it and maybe I have the same . . . I'm in the same situation as the member from Swift Current. We're both learning more and more what this is all about.

But the contracting out of work would be very unusual unless,

as I mentioned, it had something to do with a contractual obligation for a tenant.

Mr. Wall: — I think I know where the minister is going with this and I think what he's saying is that there would be no circumstance where SPMC maintenance officials are offered out by the corporation to do work for non-tenants, for someone off-site. And I can see that that's the response.

Well the very last question I probably can fit in here today, Mr. Minister, then is still on the subject of maintenance. And it specifically has to do with the overall plan of the corporation to keep its properties upgraded to the best of its abilities, to keep the properties maintained.

I wonder if there has been . . . I'm sure we're in the midst of a long-term plan for keeping properties upgraded and modern. And if we are, you know, at what point are we in? Or maybe you've got in the works a long-term plan in terms of the maintenance needs of the buildings.

We hear anecdotally — and it's only anecdotally admittedly — that, you know, some of the properties perhaps have, because of budget cut requirements on the part of the corporation, not been able to . . . haven't had the sort of upgrading and maintaining that perhaps the corporation would have liked in a better circumstance. And if that's not the case, feel free to clarify.

But I wonder if there's a long-term plan for these properties in the province and where we're at with respect to that plan?

And if there is a number that . . . a budgeted number, over the next number of years, that the corporation has for maintenance and improvement and that sort of work with the properties that are under the minister's purview?

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Chairman, in response to the member's question, there is a strategic plan. And again, as the member will appreciate and he's indicated, that it's within the scope of budgets as well that we're all faced with.

But the plan focuses on the strategic issues of the state of the infrastructure without question. I mean . . . and I know and I'm sure that the people that are responsible for that do not want to see something deteriorate to the point where it's going to be virtually impossible to repair.

So there is an ongoing — how would you say it — a review of . . . not necessarily a review, but at least visual inspections that are ongoing. So, you know there's also the effect, the ongoing effect of trying to reduce unit costs of government services in whatever means might be available, as well as the effective and efficient delivery of service, and increasing the organization and employee performance. And, you know, impressing on people the need to look after the facilities that they occupy as tenants and work with them to make sure that we can maintain and upkeep the properties adequately.

The Chair: — It now being near 5 o'clock, the committee will rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

(17:00)

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:01.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Hermanson	611
Draude	611
Stewart	611
Eagles	611
Bakken	611
Brkich	611
Weekes	611
Lorenz	611
Hart	612

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk	612
--------------------	-----

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Dearborn	612
----------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Julé	612
Crofford	612, 621
Dearborn	612
Elhard	613

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Major Projects Underway in Saskatchewan

Trew	613
------------	-----

South East Saskatchewan Association Awards Program

Toth	613
------------	-----

April is Cancer Month

Lorjé	613
-------------	-----

Valley-West Community Justice Committee

Heppner	614
---------------	-----

Voluntary Sector is Strengthened

Forbes	614
--------------	-----

Queen's Hotel Destroyed in Fire

McMorris	614
----------------	-----

White City Volunteer Awards

Hamilton	614
----------------	-----

Roundup Ready Wheat

Hillson	615
---------------	-----

ORAL QUESTIONS

Investigation into the Death of Lawrence Wegner

Heppner	615
---------------	-----

Cline	615
-------------	-----

Confidentiality of Personal Health Records

Gantefoer	616
-----------------	-----

Nilson	616
--------------	-----

Provision of Emergency Health Care

Gantefoer	617
-----------------	-----

Nilson	617
--------------	-----

Supply of Health Care Professionals

Gantefoer	618
-----------------	-----

Nilson	618
--------------	-----

Position on Conflict in Iraq

Hermanson	619
-----------------	-----

Calvert	619
---------------	-----

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan's Centennial

Crofford	620
----------------	-----

Hermanson	620
-----------------	-----

Hillson	620
---------------	-----

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

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

Crofford	621
----------------	-----

D'Autremont	622
ADJOURNED DEBATES	
SECOND READINGS	
Bill No. 3 — The Child and Family Services Amendment Act, 2003	
Toth	623
Bill No. 4 — The SaskEnergy Amendment Act, 2003	
Wall	626
Bill No. 8 — The Youth Justice Administration Act	
Heppner	627
Bill No. 5 — The Teachers Superannuation and Disability Benefits Amendment Act, 2003	
Draude	630
COMMITTEE OF FINANCE	
General Revenue Fund — Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation — Vote 53	
Osika	631
Wall	632, 638
Bakken	632