

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**Mr. Gantefer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again this afternoon I rise on behalf of citizens of Moose Jaw and district concerned about the lack of dialysis services. The prayer reads as follows:

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

Again this afternoon, signatures on this petition are mostly from the community of Moose Jaw but also from Regina.

And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I stand to present a petition on behalf of constituents in the Cypress Hills area on another matter. This one is related to crop insurance and the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important petition to the people of Cypress Hills. It's been signed by numerous individuals from the communities of Leader, Sceptre, and Mendham.

I so present.

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I present a petition regarding the historical bridges of the Battlefords. The prayer of relief which reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Minister of Highways preserve the old bridges on the North Saskatchewan River between Battleford and North Battleford.

Your petitioners come from North Battleford.

I so present.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the downright deplorable lack of a hemodialysis unit in the city of Moose Jaw. 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.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals all from the city of Moose Jaw.

I so present.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens in the Estevan constituency with grave concerns over the 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.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by people from Estevan, Bienfait, and Lampman.

I so present.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again with a petition from citizens of southern Saskatchewan who are very concerned about having access to adequate health care. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the proper steps to cause adequate medical services, including a physician, be provided in Rockglen and to cause the Five Hills Health Region to provide better information to the citizens of Rockglen.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Rockglen.

I so present.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents who are concerned with rural school closures. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be influenced to stay the closure of isolated schools such as Major, preferring instead to supply quality educations to students in a community close to their residence.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kerrobert, Saskatoon, Compeer, Cactus Lake, Luseland, and by

the looks of it, the entire town of Major.

I so present.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition dealing with drug costs.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Davidson and Cudworth.

I so present.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have yet another petition to present on behalf of constituents concerned with a section of Highway 22. 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from new residents of Dysart and the community of Govan.

I so present.

**Mr. Allchurch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of northern Saskatchewan that are also concerned about the government's handling of the crop insurance. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

The signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Meadow Lake, Loon Lake, Frenchman Butte, and St. Walburg.

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, 36, 41, 90, and no. 100.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice I shall

on day no. 39 ask the government the following question:

To the CIC minister: has SaskTel expanded its cellphone coverage for 2002; and if so, where?

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 39 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Agriculture: in light of the latest import duties put on Canadian grain by United States, what concrete plans of action has the Minister of Agriculture and his officials developed in conjunction with the federal government to end these latest American tariffs; secondly, what specific action has the minister and his officials taken in fair light to these latest duties; and third question, what specific action is the Minister of Agriculture and his officials taking in the near future to deal with these issues?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Osika:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a very pleasant task to perform on behalf of my colleague, the member from Saskatoon Southeast. And I've been asked to introduce in the west gallery, Mr. Speaker, a group of 49 students from what I'm told is a very fine school in Saskatoon called Lakeview School, Mr. Speaker. And they are accompanied by Mrs. J. Block and Mrs. S. Widenmaier, and the chaperones are Alice Welsh and Wendy Janzen.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming this fine group of young-looking people to the legislature this afternoon.

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

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### SaskPower Poster Contest

**Mr. McCall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there are increasing concerns that human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels to generate electricity is resulting in climate change. And so for the second year in a row the SaskPower Shand Greenhouse, to increase awareness and encourage positive solutions to the challenge of climate change, has sponsored a poster contest for elementary school students in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this second annual Energy & Our Environment Poster Contest was open to grade 5 and 6 students across the province and they were enthusiastic participants. Over 500 entries were received from 46 schools, and the variety and ingenuity of the ideas captured in the posters show us how all . . . show how all of us can learn from our youth.

The four contest winners were — the envelope please, thank you — Lisa Ochs of Landis, Elise Frechette of Plenty, John Crawford of Estevan, and Kimberley Pasieka of Melfort, Mr. Speaker. Each of the winners will receive a bicycle. Their school will receive a \$250 credit for the purchase of larger trees from a local nursery to be planted on school grounds, and each school will also receive \$250 worth of climate change books

and reference materials for their libraries. As well, Mr. Speaker, a winning poster was selected from each of the 46 schools and will be dry-mounted, making it suitable for display in each school.

I ask the members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating not only the winners, but all the students who took part in this contest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### **Tenth Annual Battlefords Business Excellence Awards**

**Mr. Hillson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last evening was the 10th annual Battlefords Business Excellence Awards in North Battleford. Awards were given out in seven categories.

G & C Asphalt was honoured both as Business of the Year and for Community Involvement. In his acceptance speech, owner Paul Gervais said he measured the success of his business by looking at his staff. If they were buying homes and cars, investing in their families and in their community, then his business was a success.

Mr. Speaker, on this test his business is indeed a success. For 25 years it has provided employment for hundreds of persons in the Battlefords area. Most recently he received the tender to complete the new bridge crossing on the North Saskatchewan River at the Battlefords.

Other honoured businesses included BCU Financial for Marketing, Robin Peterson for Entrepreneur of the Year for the Venice House, Customer Service winner was Pleasant View Grooming & Pet Vacations, and New Business of the Year was Pleasant Garden & Gift Centre. Also this year the Heritage Award was given to Battlefords and District Co-op for an 82-year commitment to the Battlefords.

The evening was again a sellout and master craftsman, Stanley Wychopen, again created magnificent antique replica desks as the awards. For the first time the ceremony was carried live.

Congratulations to all the winners and businesses of the Battlefords.

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

#### **Skate Canada — Saskatchewan Annual Meeting And Awards Banquet**

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the good fortune to attend Skate Canada-Saskatchewan annual meeting and awards banquet in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, we sometimes forget that behind every successful skater there is a whole team of talented people. And so I was pleased to have the opportunity to recognize not only those exceptional skaters whose skill and drive has taken them to the national level, but also the coaches, volunteers, officials, and sponsors for their commitment to the sport.

And, Mr. Speaker, it was an opportunity to recognize Skate Canada-Saskatchewan organization for all the good work they have done to promote and develop skating in the province; providing training opportunities, financial assistance, recreational programs, and development programs for skaters, coaches, and officials.

It is worth pointing out that in the promoting of their sport, Skate Canada-Saskatchewan is also doing its bit to promote lifelong fun, physical fitness, and personal achievement in the community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Skate Canada-Saskatchewan for fulfilling their mission to promote skating within the community; all the skaters for their accomplishments; and all the coaches, volunteers, and sponsors for helping to ensure that for the young people in this province the future is wide open.

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

#### **Hon. Member from Lloydminster Receives St. John Ambulance Award**

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to inform our honoured Assembly of a prestigious event that happened Saturday evening, May 4, 2003. The St. John's Ambulance, Saskatchewan Council, held an award ceremony to honour those people who have shown extraordinary courage and caring.

Mr. Speaker, the St. John's Ambulance is a part of a large organization known as St. John's of Jerusalem, initially established to provide to those in need of health care during the Crusades.

I'm especially proud to inform this Assembly of one of the recipients of an award, someone all of us know very well and are truly proud of for his singular act of unselfish assistance.

Mr. Speaker, all of us well remember an incident in the legislative cafeteria when a legislative staff member began to choke and required immediate assistance. The quick actions of the member from Lloydminster alleviated what could have been a disastrous circumstance.

Mr. Speaker, because of the member's immediate and successful response, the St. John's Ambulance Society has awarded the St. John's Award of Merit to our colleague from Lloydminster.

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

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Speaker, none other than the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan assisted in the presentation of this venerable medal in our Queen City.

I ask that all members join me in congratulating the member from Lloydminster on being recognized as a Saskatchewan hero.

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

### 2003 Kalyna Dance Festival

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last weekend I had the pleasure of attending the 2003 Kalyna Dance Festival in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. And the dance festival was started last year in Yorkton by the Kalyna School of Ukrainian Dance. It is the largest Ukrainian dance competition in Saskatchewan and featured dancers performing traditional folk dances from many different regions of the Ukraine. This year there were some 675 entries from 26 clubs across Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and North Dakota.

(13:45)

Mr. Speaker, this is one of the times that everyone was a winner. The dancers got an opportunity to meet and compete against individuals from a much larger geographical area than is usually the case. And the city of Yorkton gets to show off our Ukrainian heritage and receive the accolades due to a gracious and a generosity that's provided by our host city, and not to mention to reap the economic benefits of thousands of weekend visitors, and of course to see young people from across the province and outside of our province first-hand perform some of the Ukrainian dance.

And, Mr. Speaker, as a Ukrainian-Canadian it was an honour to be part of the weekend. And they asked me if I would participate in the dance, Mr. Speaker, and as a staryy tantsiuryst, I couldn't do a very good job. As a staryy tantsiuryst, which is an old Ukrainian dancer, I wasn't able to do that, Mr. Speaker.

So I ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating the event's Adam Fetsch, Co-Chair, Yvonne Matthies, and all the dancers, volunteers, and sponsors who hosted the festival with great success, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Humboldt Broncos in Royal Bank Cup Tournament

**Ms. Julé:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to provide all the members of the Legislative Assembly, as well as the sports enthusiasts in Saskatchewan, an update on the Humboldt Broncos at the Royal Bank Cup tournament in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the Broncos are at this point 1 for 1. On Sunday in their opening game, the Humboldt Broncos defeated the Wellington Dukes 4 to 1. And in their second game of the tournament on Monday, the Broncos lost to the Lennoxville Cougars 5-4 in double time overtime. The loss was really a bitter pill to swallow for the Broncos, Mr. Speaker, as it appeared that the Humboldt Broncos had scored in double overtime. The red light went on, the goaltender came out of the net, but the referee disallowed the goal.

Humboldt will meet the Charlottetown Abbies this afternoon at 4 p.m. in a crucial matchup. The Charlottetown Abbies, Mr. Speaker, are 0 for 2 and so they are going to be coming out very strong and I'm sure providing quite a challenge for the Broncos. But we are confident that the Humboldt Broncos will fight harder and end up on top. A win today, Mr. Speaker, will clinch a spot for the playoffs for the Broncos.

And I'm sure that all ears in Humboldt will be tuned in to that game this afternoon. From members of this Assembly, we wish the Humboldt Broncos all the best of luck. You can do it.

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

### University of Saskatchewan Research in Organic Farming

**Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan is now taking a more prominent role in coordinating research in organic farming by becoming affiliated with the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada, located in Truro, Nova Scotia.

The centre has hired Dr. Brenda Frick, who has been working out of the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) organic research unit as prairie coordinator. Her role will be to build a network of researchers across the Prairie provinces and to help coordinate organic agriculture research at Western Canadian universities, colleges, and research centres.

Mr. Speaker, organic farming techniques are an important area of study and research, and it's especially appropriate that the U of S become more involved. Canada is one of the top five producers of organic grains and oilseeds in the world and 48 per cent of the organic farmers in the Prairie provinces are right here in Saskatchewan.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in wishing Dr. Frick, the University of Saskatchewan agricultural research unit for organic agriculture, and the Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada every success in their research efforts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

#### Retention of Physicians

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, once again this NDP (New Democratic Party) government is at odds with medical professionals. This time it's doctors.

Saskatchewan doctors are now threatening job action, which would be the first time that job action was considered in the 36-year history of the Saskatchewan Medical Association. The SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) will review the government's latest offer this weekend, but they've already made it clear it will be almost certainly be rejected. SMA president, Dr. James Fritz, says the NDP government's offer is not enough to keep doctors in the province and it'll make it even harder to recruit and retain physicians.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has already created a severe doctor shortage in this province. What is the government doing to address this current crisis that they're creating?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to work with the Saskatchewan Medical Association in trying to sort out exactly what the compensation package should be. We think that there's a very fair offer — fair to the doctors, fair to the people of Saskatchewan who will have to pay the bill. We have to work together with the doctors as we develop the medical system, but we also have to work with all of the other health providers in the system.

What we will continue to do is have discussions. I will be attending the meeting on the weekend and be listening to the comments from the doctors directly, and we will continue to work at this matter.

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan doctors say the salary increase they are being offered is coming from money that would otherwise be used for retention and recruitment. That means the doctor shortage is going to get even worse. And what's the minister's response? He says, it's not his problem; that's the doctors' choice. Talk about abandoning your responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health is responsible. He is responsible to ensure that we have an adequate number of doctors in this province and it's not good enough for him to simply wash his hands of that responsibility. Mr. Speaker, once again, this NDP government is abandoning its responsibility for health care in the province. What is the NDP government going to do to increase the number of doctors in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, unfortunately my friend, who I respect, does not have very good backroom research, because it was very clear in the meeting and the comments that I made and very clear in what the doctor said, Dr. Fritz said yesterday, that the money that's available for the rural retention program, \$9.8 million, that's not being touched at all. That's going to be there. All of this is on top of that.

There are some new programs that are very innovative and very interesting that we have been discussing which would be included in some of this extra money. But practically, if they choose not to go with some of these newer programs and put it all on fees, that is their responsibility. But practically, we have retained and will continue to maintain all of the very innovative kinds of funds that have been negotiated before and will continue to explore some new ones.

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, right now Saskatchewan has the second worst doctor-to-patient ratio in Canada. The only jurisdiction that is worse is Prince Edward Island.

In fact, to get to the national average, we would need to have 300 more doctors practising in this province. And right now, Mr. Speaker, only one in three graduates from the College of Medicine in Saskatoon are staying in this province. Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is, under this NDP government we're

not only not retaining our doctors, we're losing the ones that we have.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are running out of patience with this NDP government. They promise over and over and over again with lots of rhetoric that they're going to deal with the human resources problem in the health care field. And yet time and time again they come up short in this endeavour.

Mr. Speaker, what is this government going to do to increase the number of doctors in this province?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, once again I would ask the member to get some researchers who know what they're doing. If you go and look at the active number of positions over the last four years, we have increased slowly but surely each year in the number of active doctors. And you can look at March 1999, 1,091 doctors — this is active positions; this isn't all the positions on the registry — December '02, the last number I have here is 1,251.

We've been working slowly and carefully to retain doctors. We also have been working very well with the Saskatchewan Medical Association around dealing with a number of these issues, and we will continue to do that with some very innovative programs that we continue to support.

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, obviously the minister chooses to recite rhetoric that is fed to him from the department. The Saskatchewan Medical Association, the Saskatchewan Medical Association representing the doctors of this province, are circulating information in a pamphlet and other means that say that only one in three of the graduates from the College of Medicine are staying in this province. They say that we have the second worst ratio in Canada. They say, and I quote:

... one of the most serious challenges facing health care is the shortage of health care professionals in our province. There are simply not enough doctors, nurses, and others to make sure our patients get the care they need ... As a result, waiting lists are too long and getting worse.

Mr. Speaker, that's what the doctors of Saskatchewan are saying. Nurses are leaving, doctors are leaving, waiting lists are growing, and in the meantime this government refuses to accept the reality that their human resources policy is resulting in a crisis for Saskatchewan health care.

Mr. Speaker, when will this government wake up to the realities and do something about the shortage of doctors?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, we're working very diligently at this issue and I want to give the member some information, since he has a hard time getting it from the people that help him.

This is a summary of the recruitment and retention programs. A new program in 2001, specialist recruitment and retention fund, annual budget, 1.5 million. This is for bursaries for people studying, specialists. We have a specialist emergency recovery program which was new in the year 2002, annual budget, \$14 million. We have a long-service retention program new in the 2000-2003 contract with the doctors. This is the first fund like this in Canada and there's \$4 million a year that goes into this. This is about rewarding and affirming those doctors who provide long service in Saskatchewan. We're very pleased and excited about that program.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to go through more when I have another chance.

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

#### SaskPower Policy on Firefighting Expenses

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On two occasions last summer the town of Outlook fire department was called upon to put out field fires, both of which were started by malfunctioning SaskPower equipment. One started in a meter box on a SaskPower pole and the other was started by a downed power line. As always, the Outlook fire department did an excellent job responding quickly to these fires and putting them out.

The town then billed SaskPower \$1,400 for firefighting services since SaskPower equipment was responsible for starting both these fires. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is refusing now to accept any responsibility for these costs. Will the minister direct SaskPower to reimburse the town of Outlook for the \$1,400 it spent fighting fires caused by SaskPower?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First of all I want to join with the member in congratulating the local fire department for doing the great job that they did do and obviously continue to do in the community.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower has a very clearly stated policy, Mr. Speaker, but that's not to say that we can't work with the communities to try and resolve issues like this. On this very point though, Mr. Speaker, it appears as if the policy that currently exists will not find resolution on this particular issue, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, that's not much of an answer for the town of Outlook.

When the town of Outlook inquired about this matter, a SaskPower official told them that SaskPower is only responsible for paying the cost if SaskPower reports the fire. And since SaskPower didn't report the fires, Outlook should bill the landowners. Now have you ever heard of anything so ridiculous, Mr. Speaker? Why should the landowners pay the bill for fires caused by SaskPower's equipment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, SaskPower will work with communities on issues where there . . . would assume liability for having caused the fire, Mr. Speaker.

But I've answered in the letter, as the member indicated yesterday by the way, the letter has . . . They've received a response to this from the president of SaskPower in which SaskPower does not, or believes it does not, appropriately assume responsibility on this fire.

I would certainly indicate that SaskPower will continue to work with communities to try and find resolution on difficult issues like this, Mr. Speaker.

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

(14:00)

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well my question to the minister is, will he be changing the policy? I also asked a written question on this, which was converted then, on their policy and what their policy actually was with this. And they wouldn't answer it back then, Mr. Speaker.

So my question is, will they change the policy right now so that any equipment . . . And also he talked about he wasn't sure if SaskPower started it. There is a firefighters' report that is sent in that stated that is where the fire started on the meter box and also with the SaskPower pole.

My question is: will they change the policy of this?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member makes a good point and I will commit to that member, Mr. Speaker, that I'll have SaskPower review that particular case again, Mr. Speaker.

SaskPower always works with the communities, Mr. Speaker, and I think more often than not on the cases that I've seen, have erred on the side of paying when they, when they believe that they should, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower is a responsible corporation that will work with communities, I think as it has proven for many, many years in the past, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Investment in Coachman Insurance Company

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister for SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Mr. Speaker, in April the NDP told the people of the province that SGI lost \$11 million on its . . . on yet another bad business deal they made in Ontario, investing and purchasing 100 per cent of Coachman Insurance of Ontario.

But less than two weeks later the NDP released Coachman's actual annual report for 2002 and on page 5 of that report it says that Coachman Insurance actually lost \$17.2 million. The larger SGI annual report also says Coachman lost \$17.2 million.

So the question to the minister is: why did the NDP government say before the annual report that this out-of-province investment lost 11 million and then the annual reports indicate the actual loss to taxpayers was \$17.2 million?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I would think I could ask a parallel question. Why do these members on a daily basis, from the Sask Party, get up and cite losses, individual losses, and not talk about the overall revenues, Mr. Speaker, the overall profits and revenues that those individual investments make as a cumulative effect, Mr. Speaker, back for the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The same logic applies, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in this particular case, Mr. Speaker, SGI has made an investment. Coachman, as a separate subsidiary, Mr. Speaker, obviously as he correctly indicates, lost the amount that he described, Mr. Speaker. The overall investment, Mr. Speaker, was a loss on behalf of SGI of \$11.2 million, as he indicates, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, in 2001 the NDP spent \$12 million to buy 100 per cent of Coachman Insurance Company in Ontario. And in 2002, they poured another \$2.7 million into Coachman Insurance. And earlier this month, on April 8, the NDP cabinet decided to pour another \$9.4 million into Coachman Insurance.

Mr. Speaker, for the minister: how much more taxpayers' dollars is he prepared to risk on yet another out-of-province, money-losing NDP investment?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well as I indicated in the House on this particular issue some time ago and as I've indicated publicly, Mr. Speaker, it is not accurate for that member to say that we put another \$9.4 million into this, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is that there was an investment of \$9.4 million. It was moved, Mr. Speaker, from SGI CANADA over to Coachman, over to Coachman. It makes no difference, makes no effect on the bottom line of SGI whatsoever, Mr. Speaker. No effect whatsoever. It was simply a transfer of funds from SGI CANADA over to Coachman, Mr. Speaker. No effect whatsoever.

And it was a requirement of the Ontario regulator, Mr. Speaker, a requirement of the Ontario regulator that says that you need to have 150 per cent of outstanding claims on the books as of December 31, 2002. That was the rationale for the transfer of funds, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the problem of course is that it could get even worse for the taxpayers. On page 7 of Coachman's 2002 annual report, it says that:

. . . Coachman's financial position was so bad that it was in violation of the Ontario Insurance Act.

And the annual report also says, and I quote:

Management is attempting to obtain capital from the parent company . . . to be able to continue as a going concern (Mr. Speaker).

They need money from the parent company to continue as a going concern. The parent company, Mr. Speaker, are the taxpayers of the province of Saskatchewan. So is this the \$9.4 million the minister is talking about or is there to be more taxpayers' dollars risked on this money-losing NDP venture?

Will the minister indicate to the House today if this NDP government is considering putting still more money into this Ontario insurance company?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well again, as I've indicated some time ago, it is projected that this investment, Mr. Speaker, will not only be cash flow positive but will be in a profit position as of this year, 2003, Mr. Speaker.

But let me again say, Mr. Speaker, let me again say this attack, as I have said 100 times or more in this Chamber, Mr. Speaker, is nothing more than that Sask Party wanting to discredit every single Crown that we have, Mr. Speaker — every single Crown.

They should look at the big picture, Mr. Speaker, where our Crowns last year returned to the people of Saskatchewan to provide better services an average rate of return, I believe, of around 6.4 per cent, when virtually every other portfolio of investments in the private sector, Mr. Speaker, saw a reduction, Mr. Speaker, a reduction. We should be proud of what our Crowns have done, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister, the minister asks a rhetorical question as to what this is all about — the fact that we can go day after day after day and talk about a unique and new money-losing venture that the NDP have gotten the taxpayers into. All the while they plead poverty to the province's doctors; they say they have no money for nursing training seats, Mr. Speaker. They have not any more money for highways, Mr. Speaker. Education is suffering. Our taxes are still too high in the province. They jack up crop insurance rates by 50 per cent. And yet, and yet, through their Crown corporations, they lose \$85 million overseas. That what these questions are about, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to continue to ask them until we get some answers.

The question to the minister was this: how much more money is this NDP government prepared to put in harm's way in its Coachman Insurance investment that's already lost 17 million taxpayer dollars?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the

member asks why it is that on a daily basis we stand in the House and talk about money-losing ventures, Mr. Speaker. The reason is because that Sask Party never wants to talk about any of the money-making ventures, Mr. Speaker — never wants to talk about any of the investments that make money.

I listed for him just in SaskTel alone, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel International, four investments that made money last year. Do they want to talk about that? No, they don't want to talk about that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last year our Crowns returned to the people of Saskatchewan some \$300 million. Mr. Speaker, they provided high-quality service at the lowest rates — amongst the lowest rates, if not the lowest rates — in all of Canada and in North America, Mr. Speaker. Do they want to talk about that? No, Mr. Speaker.

Do they want to talk about the \$1.6 billion that I have talked about in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker? Many, many times they have provided great services to the people of Saskatchewan. No, they want to pick and choose the little losses — the losses, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, they want to pick those losses out and talk about that rather than talking about the big picture.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister just characterized the loss of \$85 million — which doesn't include the \$28 million that the minister for deal making and SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) lost; it doesn't include the \$107 million blown by the Minister of Justice on ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), Mr. Speaker — and he characterizes that as a little loss, Mr. Speaker.

Well the only other little loss that could be so underestimated, Mr. Speaker, is the loss that that party will suffer in the next election, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — We'll give the minister another chance to answer the question. The question is this: will the minister please tell the taxpayers, will he report to the taxpayers, how much more of their hard-earned dollars he'll put at harm's way this year in Coachman Insurance in Ontario, Canada?

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

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well you know, once again, Mr. Speaker, we have the Sask Party getting up, providing misinformation about the cost of the Information Services Corporation.

And I welcome the opportunity to rise in the House because some time ago, Mr. Speaker, the member that just was up produced a paper that said, what's the real cost; saying that ISC was saying the real cost was \$107 million. But what he failed to do, Mr. Speaker, was to produce the very next page of the same document which he had, which said, what's the real cost of building that system — where the real cost was revealed on the very next page as \$60.5 million, Mr. Speaker. And the member withheld that information from the House, Mr. Speaker.

And then the next day he was on the radio. And I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, what did he say about the ISC? He said this, and I quote: "The accounting has been done right." That's what he said.

Then you know what he said, Mr. Speaker? He said that he was wrong when he said it wasn't . . . He said, the management is getting a lot of this right. That's what he said, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if that minister of ISC wants to stand up and bail out the minister for Crown Investments Corporation on the Coachman Insurance issue, he should do a better job. Because you know what, Mr. Speaker? You know what the NDP don't count in the costs for ISC? They don't count the fact that the old, tired, paper system generated \$12 million a year of dividend to the General Revenue Fund. And ever since they've created this hare-brained Crown corporation it's lost money, unable to pay a thin dime in dividends, bringing the total cost of the system to what, Mr. Speaker — \$107 million.

Mr. Speaker, if that minister wants to stand up and ask questions in this Assembly, or answer them rather, will he answer this question: how much more money is he prepared to vote for the cabinet table for SGI to blow on Coachman Insurance in Ontario?

**Hon. Mr. Cline:** — Well it's very interesting, Mr. Speaker, how the member from Swift Current thinks he can cut and paste different facts together, and take words out, and get up and make an argument.

But I just want to say, because the member from Swift Current thinks he can attack ISC in his line of questioning here, that he said, he said on the John Gormley show, Mr. Speaker — and it's a matter of public record — the accounting was right. Those were his words. Then he said the system worked. Those were his words.

So I said well if the accounting's right and the system worked, what is your problem? And this is what he said: oh he had a new complaint; it was that we had borrowed money and operated the system at a loss by paying a dividend to the GRF (General Revenue Fund). And you know what I said, Mr. Speaker? I said well we were doing that but we stopped that practice, we stopped doing that.

So we have now met every complaint that the member has. And when we confront the member in public about these complaints he admits they're all fixed and yet he gets up day after day and says there's still a problem — because there's no credibility over there, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, what we just witnessed in this Assembly is probably the reason why this minister's bailout of the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) is failing so badly. Because who just ran over there to advise those two ministers over there on these questions? The minister of SPUDCO, Mr. Speaker. The



\$28 million man was just over there.

The minister of ISC, the \$107 million land titles system, hasn't even come close to answering the question.

Will he defend for the people of the province of Saskatchewan the fact that he has voted at the cabinet table to approve \$85 million in out-of-province losses in the Crown corporations while they say they have no money for health care, while they say they have no money for education, while they jack up crop insurance rate, Mr. Speaker, while they refuse to lower taxes on productivity. Will he give that explanation to the Legislative Assembly?

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

(14:15)

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me make my point, Mr. Speaker, let me make my point. Every single dollar that is lost, every single dollar that has been lost, Mr. Speaker, is regretted by the separate Crowns, Mr. Speaker. They don't enjoy losing that money, Mr. Speaker.

But let me make this point. In many of those cases, in many of those cases they were start-up losses that were anticipated. They were anticipated.

And let me put this in the big picture. That member from Swift Current, from the Sask Party, talks about the \$85 million. Let's put this in perspective. It is important . . . Those losses are important, I grant them that. But put it in perspective — \$300 million that were returned to the people of Saskatchewan for services; \$1.6 billion returned to the people of Saskatchewan for services, compared to the 85.

Mr. Speaker, and let me make this prediction, on many of those investments, on many of those investments they will return for the people of Saskatchewan, into the future, huge dividends to provide even greater and better services here in Saskatchewan.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, please.

## MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

### Rates for 911 System

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This morning it was my pleasure to have an opportunity to tour the Saskatoon public safety answering point for the 911 system and to do so particularly during Emergency Preparedness Week.

I also took the opportunity to announce publicly that we have restructured the 911 fees in the province. I want to inform the legislature that the province has approved new rates for 911 services that will be charged on the monthly phone bills. I am confident that these new rates . . . that as a result of these new rates, the 911 system will not only be sustainable but can be improved over the next five years.

We have taken advantage of the opportunity provided to us by

the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission) decision which directs new rates for infrastructure on the 911 fee. This portion that is operated by SaskTel, we've taken advantage of this to ensure that a new, lower fee is implemented across the 911 system and that it is harmonized between land lines and the cellular services.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, there will be a single rate of 59 cents per month for land lines in the province. Additionally a 49 cent per month charge will be placed on cellphone numbers. Mr. Speaker, this accounts for a reduction of 41 cents a month for residential numbers.

As I've mentioned, the new rates also include a charge on cellphones for the first time. SaskTel Mobility will be charging a standard 49 cents a month. The CRTC has directed that 11 cents a month be charged on the infrastructure portion of the 911 services for cellphones. The charge for the operating portion is the same on the cellphones as it is on the land lines, and that's been set at 38 cents. Again as a result, we have a 59 cent charge on land lines; 49 cents on cellphones.

I think that this is an important set of changes as it helps to provide a more stable and consistent approach to the 911 service, and it also provides us with an opportunity to improve the services as we look forward over the next five years.

Mr. Speaker, the 911 service exemplifies what Emergency Preparedness Week is about, that is namely helping Saskatchewan people recognize the risks in their daily lives, learning what to do about it, and how to deal in particular with an emergency. With the recent expansion of the 911 service, Mr. Speaker, about 97 per cent of Saskatchewan residents now have access to 911 service. Expansion to additional northern communities and Lloydminster is expected to be completed later this year.

I want to tell the Assembly and all members that a healthy 911 system that's able to change and improve over time is a valuable provincial asset, both now and in the future, and it's an important part of this government's safe community strategy. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for providing a copy of his statement. I'm sure that this will be viewed with welcome relief by all of the customers, whether they be rural or urban.

We also like the idea of having a level playing field for all customers, so those with cellphones who were not previously charged for 911 will now be charged. Since a lot of the 911 calls come in via cellphone — and I might add, except for Wood River constituency where there's a very, very small portion that even have cell service — this charge on 911 cell cost may impact a bit on the downturn of prank calls or calls that are less of an emergent nature.

But, Mr. Speaker, while this announcement in and of itself is a good thing, there's still a number of problems that face the 911 system. And the responsibility for addressing these problems lies definitely with the government that introduced this, and

that's the NDP government.

As members opposite know, the official opposition represents a good majority of rural customers as well as numerous businesses that have for the past years been forced to pay for a service that was not only consistently behind schedule, but when it finally did arrive often proved to be less than effective, and on some occasions was completely inaccessible.

In fact while members opposite may boast about the so-called 97 per cent coverage of 911 in the province, we know that in many areas of Saskatchewan it's still virtually impossible to access this service because local service lines simply do not allow it. I'm sure that members can imagine the frustration and disappointment of residents in those communities who have been unable to use the system that, according to members opposite, is supposedly state of the art.

Small wonder then that for a number of years people have been asking, why are we paying for something that we can't use? It's a good question, an honest question, and one that really deserves an answer.

It's no secret that those extra surcharges on our phone bills, costs that supposedly went to building and maintaining the state-of-the-art 911 system, have been a major issue for people of Saskatchewan.

We also know that there were to be four public service answering points and now there are three. On top of that there seemed to be very little logic attached when it came to putting these public service answering points in place. We've heard of situations where an ambulance in one part of the province is being given directions for someone in a totally different area, someone who is not even remotely familiar with the area.

Response time has been and will continue to be a major concern for all residents of the province — and well it should be — for those first few minutes following an accident or event are the most critical and can literally mean the difference between life and death. And if the system that's in place doesn't work or can't work, then it can hardly be called reliable and it most certainly won't be put in . . . put to use in case of an emergency.

Mr. Speaker, we're also a bit curious as to why the minister just a few weeks ago saw fit to give ISC \$80,000 to develop an on-line addressing and mapping system for use by the 911 system. Since Saskatchewan is virtually one of the last jurisdictions in Canada and maybe in North America to implement 911 service, wouldn't it make sense to use a service that's already been created in some other jurisdiction?

As usual though, the members opposite not only consider it necessary to try and reinvent the wheel, but also to needlessly spend even more hard-earned taxpayers' dollars. And we've certainly heard about that in the last few days and weeks with the amount of money that this government has wasted needlessly on investments, etc., throughout the world.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to address just a quick point on some concerns that have been expressed by jurisdictions in the province about being charged an additional \$1.50 per capita for 911 dispatching levy. And this is something that's relatively

new that came up and the question that begs to be asked is, what's the authorization? Is there legislation that has allowed this to happen or where is the justification for this \$1.50 per capita levy for 911 in certain jurisdictions in this province?

So when we consider all of the issues with 911, I think residents will be very happy to see the rates decrease. And we applaud that, Mr. Speaker. I think this is very good for the customers of the province and it's very deserving. Thank you.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Environment and Northern Affairs.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I ask for leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, kind Speaker. I want to ask the members of the Assembly here to recognize two friends of mine, one very close friend. I'm not sure if that's his girlfriend or his daughter.

But in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Clarence Tsi Boy Iron and with Clarence is his friend, Jocelyn Wuttenee. And Jocelyn is with the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), I believe. And Clarence is the world-famous Tsi Boy Iron who's on the radio and does a lot of free broadcasting. Tsi Boy is an accomplished broadcaster, worked many years with MBC (Missinipe Broadcasting Corporation), and is also a fellow hockey player. And all of us in hockey-player-land wish that Tsi Boy would skate as fast as he speaks Cree.

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

So I said, Speaker, I said thanks for coming to join me. And meet with me one of these days; it might mean a free meal for him.

So once again, Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to help me in welcoming Jocelyn and world-famous Clarence Tsi Boy Iron.

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

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased this afternoon to respond on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 184.

**The Speaker:** — Response to 184 has been tabled.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm extremely pleased on behalf of the government to stand and convert for debates returnable number . . . questions 185 through 188 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 185, 186, 187, 188 converted to orders for returns (debatable).

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased this afternoon once again to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions 189 through 191 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to 189, 190, 191 have been tabled.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill No. 13

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Belanger that **Bill No. 13 — The Parks Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take part in the debate on Bill No. 13, The Parks Act. Mr. Speaker, we've reviewed this Bill in depth and talked to some of the many stakeholders concerning this Bill.

Really, there's two parts to this Bill and the first part is extending leases from one year to five years to livestock producers. And as, Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan are well aware that in the last few years we've had considerable drought and the livestock producers of Saskatchewan has asked to graze their cattle on Crown land. And we note that wildlife associations and Ducks Unlimited did open up their lands to grazing and some haying because of the very severe drought conditions in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important that a proper balance be kept between the environment and the economy. We have to have a sustainable environment, but also have to have a sustainable economic base in this province. And it's important that that option is left open to use parkland and Crown land for grazing. And the extension of the permit from one year to five years, I think, is important on many different levels.

(14:30)

First of all, many of these areas need some infrastructure put in, anywhere from digging dugouts or fencing, electric fence or even more of a permanent fence. And it's certainly more economical and wise to allow a producer to have a long-term permit that would recognize this need and give the livestock producers greater flexibility in their grazing pasturing plans, Mr. Speaker.

A number of questions, of course, comes up when we talk about extending permits, and naturally it's the cost of the permits to the livestock producer. And this is an area that's critical, naturally, especially in a dry year when all the costs to the livestock producers have gone up. But it's critical at any time of the year to have a reasonable rate to be charged for these permits to the livestock producer and also be fair to the taxpayer and to the province of Saskatchewan so that this money can be

used properly for the sustainability of parklands and be environmentally sustainable for the future of the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, a number of other questions comes up of course is the environmental impact on these lands that this Bill speaks to. Naturally the proper grazing requirements need to be addressed so that these lands aren't overgrazed and kept for the future of this province.

And in the past, as we know in many areas of this province, livestock producers are very reliable and very concerned about keeping pastures grazed properly, and so that that really natural resource can be kept for future of people and for their operations as well. They know they don't want to lose that right to be able to use these lands in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Now the second part to this Bill, really it's concerning moving many different small pieces of land, either selling it or purchasing it from various parts around the parks. And on the face of it and from the people that we have talked to that have been affected by this, it seems to have made sense in most if not all cases where because of a highway or a stream or a river, that some land would be on one side or the other, that this land could be sold to a private operator or to a campground in one situation; or also small pieces that are on the side of the park of the river could be put into the park and make it much more easier to deal with and make a lot more sense as far as the boundaries are concerned.

Mr. Speaker, there's a number of other things that . . . questions that arise from this which is not dealt in this Bill, but also does this have any affect on TLE (treaty land entitlement) settlements in the future? And these are questions that needs to be addressed.

One other item that's interesting with these very small changes in land description, it's going to be interesting to see how the ISC is going to handle these. Certainly we have seen in the past that on fairly easy transactions and changes of ownership that ISC has really failed miserably, besides the tremendous over cost. But these small changes, it's going to be very interesting to see if ISC can actually keep up with these changes and be able to record the property changes in the future, Mr. Speaker, so that people of Saskatchewan know exactly what the changes are and what they mean for future development.

Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd like to let this Bill go to Committee of the Whole where we will be answering . . . asking many more questions and hoping to get answers on those questions that have been brought forward to myself and to my colleagues.

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

##### Bill No. 17

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 17 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — I'm happy to rise today to speak on this Bill and the amendments to The Land Surveys Act, 2000. It's not

the amendments so much, Mr. Speaker, that are of the greatest concern to our party at this point, but the overall failings of the New Democrat's ISC program.

They are many, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately the cost doesn't seem to be stopping. We are up to 107 million already and rising. Mr. Speaker, this was originally outlined to cost less than \$20 million — and the basic idea was to take a paper land titles system and computerize it — it's now at \$107 million. That's a 500 per cent cost increase.

This is completely unacceptable, Mr. Speaker. But what makes this even more deplorable is the fact that it just doesn't work. There are many, many instances — it runs a whole gambit — of places that this fails miserably. It's not surprising with the cost that the cost overruns are so enormous as well. It's this same minister, the current Justice minister, who oversaw the cost for the closure of the Regina Plains hospital, which went about \$50 million over budget. So seeing that ISC is greatly over budget now is not surprising.

NDP also said that ISC would be something that would be in demand around the world, Mr. Speaker, and people involved in globetrotting in a vain attempt to make at least one sale. This included going to Albania. This, Mr. Speaker, can only be explained as hare-brained. Not only have no sales been made but it was questionable whether a computerized system could be put in Albania at all with regards to the infrastructure that they currently have with regards to having come out of very harsh times, phone lines not even being in place and whatnot.

The system, Mr. Speaker, as I've said the largest tragedy is not the \$107 million cost, it's the fact that it doesn't work, and it doesn't work on a number of levels. One of the big problems that this has, Mr. Speaker, is it was unable to identify people with the same last name. The old paper system, you had town . . . section, town, range, meridian, and it worked very well. You could tell exactly which RM (rural municipality) any piece of property was in.

Constituents of mine, Mr. Speaker, had a situation: the Sawchucks of Coleville, Saskatchewan. They had nothing to do with ISC whatsoever but there was a Mr. John Marshall Sawchuck on the other side of the province had some liens against his property, I believe with Revenue Canada. In the transition to the computerized system, John and Verna, who were older, older farmers in the Coleville area, were very surprised one day to find out that they had writs against their land, and fairly distressed, Mr. Speaker.

They wrote ISC and asked, you know, why is this there? And basically they didn't get a very satisfactory response. They were forced to go to one of the local lawyers in town, Mr. Miller, and Mr. Miller worked on their behalf to get the caveats removed.

It's telling, Mr. Speaker, that ISC actually had a fund set up to kind of make amends for the boobos of their system. So this is a tragedy in and of itself that they'd be entering into a program and then set up a fund to compensate people for the travesty of the number of losses because the system doesn't work.

I made application on behalf of the Sawchucks — due to the fact that they were complete innocent bystanders to a

government system run amok — and wrote the minister a letter. And his officials returned a letter that said to John and Verna Sawchuck that this was not their problem; it was the problem of the federal government having a writ against it. The federal government however had . . . their department had written and said clearly this was the problem of land titles in Saskatchewan going to a computerized system.

I even, Mr. Speaker, raised this in question period in this House, and unfortunately John and Verna Sawchuck of Coleville are still out their nearly \$400. This isn't fair, it's wrong, and it's just one of many examples of where ISC has gone completely wrong, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this is probably the number one issue that I get in the Kindersley constituency office, is problems with ISC. The oil and gas industry in our area, the surveyors in particular say that this program is a nightmare.

One of the aspects that can happen with ISC is numbers are assigned . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Why is the member from Moose Jaw Wakamow on her feet?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — With leave to introduce a guest, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for Kindersley for allowing the interruption.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the House, Gerry Huget sitting in the west gallery, the president of the Saskatchewan Professional Fire Fighters here to watch the proceedings this afternoon.

I'm very pleased he's here this afternoon, and I would like all members to give him a warm welcome.

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

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 17 — The Land Surveys Amendment Act, 2003 (continued)

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we get a number of calls in the Kindersley constituency with regards to ISC. I just recently received telephone calls from financial institutions, financial institutions that have to deal with ISC in an ongoing basis with the way that . . . when they're setting mortgages up and applications for mortgage on property, transfer of titles, transferring names on titles.

And a manager of one of these financial institutions spoke to

me just the other day, ripping his hair out — and unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, as he's balding he doesn't have a lot to go, and this is very hard esthetically on him as well as emotionally; it costs a great deal of money to his institution — but his financial institution in one of our smaller communities in the riding, Mr. Speaker, has actually been charged and over gone on their account at ISC. And this would never happen, but there was a change in the rates, and there's been stuff stuck in there for months at a time. So when there's money in the account to cover the cost of the transactions and then the rates change but things have been held up for months at a time, it causes a great deal of frustration.

It's problematic as well for anybody getting a mortgage having to go through bridge financing. So in essence you can, at points, be paying interest on two times the amount that you're borrowing. And often in property, this can be a substantial amount.

Well every time that ISC has failed to produce the product that it wanted, there seems to be an answer by the NDP and that's simply let's just put more money into this. We had a perfectly good model that existed in Alberta that was the cost of about \$18 million. The original cost of ISC, as I've stated before, was supposed to be around \$20 million. But now we're up to \$107 million and it doesn't seem that the end is in sight.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, it is problematic in that it still doesn't work. I've spoken with lawyers, Mr. Speaker, that say there's even a question within the realm of law whether the parcels — which are all by number now — are ever able to be determined in a court of law.

For example, Mr. Speaker, if you have a quarter section that happens to have a roadway through it, a second roadway to access an oil and gas . . . or a gas well and possibly a railway through it, you could have up to six different numbers for one quarter section. And each of these as well, for transferring title and whatnot, all requires a fee. This is incredibly inefficient and it's incredible that this method would even be contemplated unless it's just a pure tax grab by the back door to try to make up for the horrendous losses that the over costs of this project have run.

Mr. Speaker, there are other examples in the riding of Kindersley alone where farmers have had quarter sections, one in, one out, cut up. For whatever reason, they buy a half section together and half of it goes through, half of it doesn't. It just, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it never seems to stop.

Mr. Speaker, many people and groups are currently signing this Bill because like so many other projects, when you get on the phone and say the NDP is doing something with ISC, people either break into laughter or break into tears.

(14:45)

Again the financial institution, Mr. Speaker, from the Kindersley riding that had to call ISC, contacted the call centre, and the individual that has to address their concerns, at the end he just says: do you have the power to help me or not? And the person said: well, no I don't. And it really puts into question again, what is the whole point of having the call centre when

the people answering cannot finalize any of the problems that are being addressed.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, as this Bill, Bill 17, an amendment to The Land Surveys Act continue to be under further study, I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

## SECOND READINGS

### Bill No. 20 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2003

**Hon. Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in my capacity as Deputy House Leader to, at the conclusion of my remarks, move second reading of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, the Third Report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, which was recently adopted by resolution of this Legislative Assembly, provides for the reconfiguration of the existing committee process under the rules of the Assembly.

While the majority of the changes proposed in that report do not require a legislative amendment, some changes are required to provide for the payment of an allowance to the chairperson or deputy chairperson of a standing or a special committee.

Mr. Speaker, in recognition of the increased duties of the chairperson or deputy chair under the new committee process, the Act was amended to provide the Board of Internal Economy the discretion to provide a sessional allowance to a chairperson or a deputy chair of a particular standing or a special committee on such terms and conditions as the Board of Internal Economy sees fit.

The Bill also defines the phrase, standing or special committee, for the purposes of the Act, and then provides that payment of such an allowance to a chairperson or a deputy chairperson of a standing or special committee will not disqualify that member from sitting in the House pursuant to section 10.1, that restriction.

Mr. Speaker, these changes are a small but necessary part of the major revisions to the committee process as recommended by the all-party Special Committee on Rules and Procedures in their third report.

Mr. Speaker, I do invite all members of the House to join the government in supporting what we hope will be an important step forward in the effectiveness of the operations of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I am therefore pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to address this particular Bill. This Bill deals with, as the minister said, a report coming down from the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures, the third report, that

recommended various rule changes and changes in procedures to this Assembly which I believe are going to have a profound and lasting impact on how democracy is practised in this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, there are, as the minister said, a number of legislative rules that need to be dealt with to implement these procedures, and this is one of those measures. And we support the moving ahead of this particular piece of legislation just as we support the third report from the special committee, Mr. Speaker.

There are a number of changes here that I think need to be understood. The changes that the committee is proposing is that the committee work will be much more extensive than it currently is, that the four standing committees will be carrying out much more functions than have been done in the past. Therefore those areas are going to be a lot busier. The people involved, and in particular the chairmen and Deputy Chairs of those committees, will be doing a lot more work, Mr. Speaker.

The Public Accounts Committee, it changes very little. It already does a significant amount of work in the Assembly both during session and outside of session, Mr. Speaker. Crown Corporations Committee will be changing significantly. Even the name on that particular committee will change and they will be taking on added duties. So again, that particular committee, the members involved in it, the Chair and the Deputy Chairs, will be much more involved in the operations of the legislature and the dealings that take place, the accountability before the Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

There are a couple of little items on here that I want to be able to talk to the minister about to get some clarifications on, to understand just what the impacts are going to be, and what the impact on the province will be of these small changes.

Therefore to give us the time, Mr. Speaker, to talk to the minister about these, I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 21 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Melnychuk:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2003.

It is necessary to amend The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act to provide options to pension plan members who acquire a new spouse after retirement. Mr. Speaker, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Act pertains to the following defined benefit pensions plans: the Liquor Board Superannuation Plan, the Power Corporation Superannuation Plan, the Workers' Compensation Board Superannuation Plan, and the Public Service Superannuation Plan which also includes the Anti-TB (tuberculosis) League Superannuation Plan and the Saskatchewan Transportation Company Superannuation Plan.

Each pension plan has a board that oversees the operations of the plan, Mr. Speaker. The defined benefits plans were closed to new members in 1977. As at December 31, 2002, there were

about 2,772 active members participating in the pension plans, about 177 inactive members, and about 7,907 pensioners. In less than 10 years all members will have likely retired, Mr. Speaker.

At present, when a pensioner acquires a spouse after retirement, the new spouse is not eligible for a pension upon the death of the pensioner. It is desirable, Mr. Speaker, to offer pensioners the opportunity to restructure their pension to provide a surviving spouse benefit for a new spouse.

The pension will be based upon the ages of both the pensioner and the spouse at the time the pension is recalculated. The same joint annuity options available at the time of retirement will be available at the time the pension is recalculated. The cost to recalculate a pension after retirement for the purpose of providing a surviving spouse benefit to a new spouse will be borne by the pensioner.

Mr. Speaker, I hereby move second reading of The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond to the minister's statement concerning Bill No. 21. As the minister pointed out that the changes would allow a retired member of the pension plan to change whom their spouse is and provide a survivor's benefit to the new spouse without any cost to the pension plan. It seems to make a lot of sense that this would be the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

As we know, pensions are very important in society. For many years people did not keep pensions and, with the Canada Pension Plan not in the greatest of shape, one wonders if people that when they retire, will have enough money to retire in comfort and enjoy their years of retirement.

And, Mr. Speaker, so it's of interest that these changes are being made to help out with these items that the minister has explained. We certainly will take this to the people of Saskatchewan and ask for their input and talk to the stakeholders concerning this issue.

And I know other MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), opposition members, will want to speak on this Bill and ask some important questions in Committee of the Whole when it gets to that stage.

So at this point I'd like to move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

#### **Bill No. 22 — The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003**

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003.

This Bill reflects the evolving role of pharmacists in our health care system. It also addresses some administrative matters involving the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association and the Representative Board of Saskatchewan Pharmacists.

Specifically, the proposed Bill will create

regulatory-by-law-making authority allowing pharmacists to prescribe medications. It will change the name of the association from the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists, in recognition of its purely regulatory role, and it will create the legal means for transferring funds from the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to the Representative Board of Saskatchewan Pharmacists to reflect a corresponding transfer of some responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to address the first amendment regarding the bylaw-making authority which provides pharmacists with the legal authority to prescribe and dispense emergency contraception.

Currently emergency contraception medication is only available with a physician's prescription. This means a woman must visit a family doctor, a walk-in clinic, or emergency room, or contact their physician for a verbal prescription that may be difficult to do after hours. Allowing pharmacists to prescribe and dispense this medication will improve access for women, both rural and urban.

The Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association approached the government with the request that pharmacists in Saskatchewan be allowed to dispense these medications without the need for a prescription from a physician. By approving access to this form of contraception, we hope to reduce the number of unintended pregnancies in our province.

Mr. Speaker, we are not the first province to grant pharmacists the authority to prescribe this medication. Both Quebec and British Columbia have legislation that enables pharmacists to prescribe emergency contraception.

We consulted with a number of groups when contemplating this amendment to the Act. The following have shown their support: the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association, who requested the change; the Representative Board of Saskatchewan Pharmacists; the College of Pharmacy and Nutrition at the University of Saskatchewan; and both the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the Saskatchewan Medical Association were supportive of the change, with the clear understanding that the corresponding bylaws and amendments to the drug schedules regulations will allow the prescribing of emergency contraception only.

The college and the Saskatchewan Medical Association have been assured that this is our intent and that any other changes would require further review and consultation. The Minister of Health must approve changes to the bylaws and to the drug schedules regulations.

Mr. Speaker, there are two other amendments proposed to The Pharmacy Act. The Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association has requested a name change to reflect its regulatory role. It will be called the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists.

The third amendment to The Pharmacy Act concerns the transfer of funds from the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to the Representative Board of Saskatchewan Pharmacists. The Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association is the regulatory body. The Representative Board of

Saskatchewan Pharmacists is a separate legal body that acts on behalf of its members in matters such as the negotiation of fees and reimbursements.

This change will give the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association the authority to transfer money to the representative board. This is money that had been intended for alternative reimbursement to pharmacies and pharmacists for innovative services. With the transfer of funds, the Representative Board of Saskatchewan Pharmacists would now operate that alternative reimbursement program.

Mr. Speaker, each of these amendments has their own benefits. Some will be felt directly by Saskatchewan residents, others by our Saskatchewan health care professionals. With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of this Bill.

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

(15:00)

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, The Pharmacy Act and this Bill to amend it really is mostly a housekeeping piece of legislation. It changes the name; it's a name change from the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists. That is one area that, you know, and I think the consulting has been done in that area.

It also removes the word pharmaceutical, avoiding confusion with pharmaceutical industry and drug manufacturers.

Mr. Speaker, the SMA, it's the SMA's understanding that they will also be included in further consultation for any future considerations to allow pharmacists to prescribe drugs other than emergency contraceptives. It is noted that, it is noted that in the current Act any regulatory bylaws must be provided . . . approved by the minister. In other words there are some safeguards built in there that, you know, it would stop at the emergency contraceptive prescription and the pharmacists wouldn't have any more right on past that until the SMA is consulted properly and it receives minister's approval.

Although, Mr. Speaker, it's a Bill that is mainly housekeeping in nature, I think there are some consultations that we have to make to make sure that the Bill does meet with all the players — whether it's the manufacturers, the college of physicians or whoever this Bill impacts. So, Mr. Speaker, until we have a chance to consult with the players in the . . . that this Bill will impact, I would move that we would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

## COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

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

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today is Michael Jackson, chief of protocol for the province, and

Debbie Saum, senior planning and policy adviser.

### Clause 1

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. And Madam Minister, thank you to you and thank you to your officials as well, and welcome.

I just have a few questions on Bill 19 that I'd like clarified. I understand that the Saskatchewan Protective Services Medal was brought in partly because of a response to a request from the province's police forces who have been asking for provincial recognition of long service by their members for some time.

Over the years how many requests have been made for this, and why did it take until now to implement?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The first request that we received for this medal was on May 2002 and then in June the Association of Chiefs of Police wrote a letter supporting this proposal. And then the government decided in principle to prepare legislation during this spring session.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. One of the things that I noted about the Protective Services Medal is that it can be awarded at any time before the specified 25-year time frame has elapsed, especially if it's believed that service was outstanding and someone deserved to be recognized.

While we can certainly recognize the exemplary work that our protective services personnel perform on a 24/7 basis, we're also wondering about the criteria here that would separate this award from a citation for bravery or a recognition of merit.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The purpose of this medal isn't particular acts of bravery or whatnot. It's meant to be a recognition of long service to the people of the province.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Madam Minister, I note that the Protective Services Medal is seen as somewhat distinctive in Canada because it includes such a wide range of protective services. Could you please indicate the range of protective services personnel that would be considered eligible for this award and any idea of the specific criteria that has to be met in order to receive this award?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The areas that would be covered would include all provincial, municipal, and airport firefighting and fire prevention organizations, the RCMP, all municipal police services, Saskatchewan Legislative Assembly, Canada Customs and Revenue Agency, Citizenship and Immigration Canada, all emergency medical service organizations, Canadian Forces, Saskatchewan Environment, Parks Canada, Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation — transport compliance, Saskatchewan Corrections and Public Safety, the Correctional Services of Canada, Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

And I will mention that that would be based on 25 years of service, as far as the criteria goes, with good conduct and on the recommendation of their senior officer.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Have any other

jurisdictions been in contact with your department to get more information about this award and how it will be administered? And if so, can you tell me which jurisdictions those are?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — The one that we are particularly knowledgeable about is the Alberta Law Enforcement Long Service Medal. And we believe that that was where the idea came from when we were approached with this same idea. But as well they've just added a new Emergency Service Medal as well.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Since eligibility for the Protective Services Medal will be retroactive to January 2003, we understand that there are to be a number of presentations this year, to be followed by one annually. Approximately how many presentations will be made?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I think the estimate at this time is that there would be about 1,500. And the idea is that this would likely occur in various communities in the province where there's concentrations of people who would be receiving these, and that of course the local MLA would be a guest at those events as well.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Okay. Since this would be something that all the communities across the province would be interested and appreciate hosting, would these presentations take place throughout the province or in just one or two central locations?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Yes, I think the member is familiar with the Queen's Jubilee Medals. It would be very similar to that, I think, and would have a number of events with the MLAs attending in the different areas of the province.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Do you have a limit as to the total number of Protective Services Medals that will be given out annually?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — There would be no intent on our part to limit it. It would depend on the eligibility, given the three criteria that I mentioned before — the 25 years, the good conduct, and the recommendation by a commanding officer.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you. Turning to the Saskatchewan Centennial Medal, I note that this will be awarded to those individuals who have made significant contributions, and to honour their outstanding achievements. This seems very similar to current provincial awards already in place such as the Saskatchewan Order of Merit or the Volunteer Medal. Other than being awarded on the occasion of the province's centennial, how will this award differ from the others and what criteria will set it apart?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — This award is again similar to, in intent, to the Queen's Jubilee Medal in the fact that it's a one-time award. I think that . . . I'll just read here. It says to be eligible to receive this honour, it would be the intention again to hold presentation events as a special way of celebrating the centennial.

And I would suspect — although I don't know because it'll be the actual committee that formulates the details around this — I would suspect it would be people of particularly long service



and recognition, given that it's a centennial medal.

**Ms. Eagles:** — You stated it is a one-time-only award in honour of the province's centennial in 2005. And just to clarify, do you have any idea as to how it will be administered?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — In this particular one it would be the Saskatchewan Honours Advisory Council that will recommend the number of medals and the selection process. And it is likely that we would then consider the council's recommendation and make public the specific criteria.

But again, harkening back to the model used for the Queen's Golden Jubilee medal, there would be a number of citizens who are in positions of officially recognized service, that by virtue of the work they do in senior leadership positions — people for example like judges, the Legislative Assembly — that would be included in the recognition and then beyond that there would be an allocation of nominees. And I think you're familiar with how the Queen's Jubilee medal was done, so likely very similar to that.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. And how will the selection take place since this legislation comes into force upon assent? Does this mean people can bring forward . . . a name forward for consideration following that or will they be required to wait until the province's centennial, or will the names just be collected for the next 18 months and the nominees be chosen from that group?

(15:15)

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Because of the cost and the massive amount of work involved in a wide public nomination process, what usually happens in these cases is allocations of . . . a certain number of medals are allocated to different bodies who would be in a position to make sound recommendations, again as was done for the Queen's Jubilee. And it would be up to those individuals then to decide what process they would use for their allocation.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. You mentioned numbers and that is the next question I had to ask you in fact. Do you have any idea what the . . . what number we are looking at as far as Centennial Medals to be given out? Will it be 10, 20, 50, or more? Any idea as to what the limit is?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — I think at this point we're talking, on the low end, 1,500; on the high end, 5,000. I think it's going to depend on deciding who all would really be required to have allocations and then I guess do some math and see how that works out.

So that's not completely determined yet. And I think that, although we don't want to be cheap when we're in a centennial year, I think we would also have to look at what the costs would be of doing that properly.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Section 5 of the Bill allows for the appointment of an advisory committee or any technical or professional adviser who may be considering necessary . . . considered necessary for the purpose of assisting the council in selecting the nominees for a recommendation.

Isn't there a council already in place once — one that handles the Order of Merit and the Volunteer Medal — and couldn't this council also be given the responsibility of administering the two medals that we are dealing with here today?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Again the honours are normally done by the honours advisory committee and they will still be the final determination on the centennial medals and as well on the other one. The one difference with the Protective Services Medal is that there would be an advisory committee formed of people from RCMP, municipal police, fire services, corrections, Canadian armed forces, the Provincial Secretary to give advice on that because it's a more specialized area.

**Ms. Eagles:** — You mentioned an honours advisory committee, Madam Minister. Is that committee in place now or is that something that has to be appointed yet?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Yes, the regular council is in place. The chairperson is Dr. Terence McKague, and the members are Hon. Ed Bayda, Judy Samuelson, Peter MacKinnon, Trevor Powell, Cecil King, Glayne Axtell, Sharon Butala, Yvette Moore, Gary Shaddock, and Michael Jackson.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. Much of the detail in this has been left to regulations. And with the other medals, award medals that are already in place, it seems that there would be a very little need of regulations since the template for administering and awarding medals already exists.

Could you clarify that for us today?

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Our goal would be to have as few new regulations as we can possibly maintain while still accomplishing the intent of the Act.

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Madam Minister. And, Madam Minister, that is all the questions I have today, and I thank you for clarifying some issues for me. And I also thank your officials for coming in today to help us answer some. Thank you.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

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

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the minister and I ask the minister to introduce her officials.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair. To my right is Christine Tanner, the deputy minister of Labour. Directly behind Christine is Peter Federko from the Workers' Compensation Board; he's the chief executive officer. And directly behind myself is Pat Parenteau, a senior policy analyst from the Department of Labour.

**Clause 1**

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials. I only have a few questions regarding the Bill and some of them to start with are regarding other provinces.

It was mentioned in the debate back and forth about the other provinces that have passed legislation similar to this. How many provinces . . . Does the minister know how many provinces have passed legislation? And I guess, further to that, is the legislation similar? Does it cover the same types of cancers that our legislation is talking about?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, the other provinces: Alberta passed the legislation on April 9 of this year; Manitoba passed very similar or pretty similar legislation last year, May 23 of '02; Nova Scotia has legislation in second reading debate; Prince Edward Island is being strongly lobbied to introduce similar legislation, similar to Nova Scotia's; Newfoundland is undertaking an independent review of the existing literature; and Ontario deals with this as a policy.

**Mr. McMorris:** — To the minister again, the WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) review committee rejected this change the last time it was brought forward. Could you, I guess, explain to me some of the scientific research that has been done since that time to warrant the Bill going through? Why does WCB now feel that it's warranted to pass this type of legislation whereas the last time it came forward, they didn't?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — To answer your first question, you talked about the committee of review. The firefighters had made a presentation to the committee of review, but the committee of review did not have access to all of the scientific literature so at that time they did not make a recommendation for a legislative review.

Since that time there has been a number of studies that have been done. Basically, the main one that was done in Manitoba, or used for the legislation in Manitoba was Guidotti and Goldsmith. There is a list of research and studies that has gone on. I can provide that to you. But that was the main one that was used in Manitoba and was also used here with our legislation.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Are there any, currently, any other types of professionals that are looking at being covered in this same way, in reverse onus method? Are you familiar with any other professions that are coming forward? I know this is a little bit of a precedent setting for WCB. Are there any other professionals that are coming forward that would like the same sort of legislation that you're aware of?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — None that I'm aware of.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you. Could you give me an approximate cost of the changes specifically to WCB? We're certainly sensitized to that after last week's report, and so will there be some added costs to WCB with this legislative change?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — In the opinion of WCB, there are no incremental costs associated with the proposed amendments.

The current legislation enables WCB to accept these types of claims in their occupational disease policy. What this legislative

amendment does is establish the rebuttable presumption and it's not a new entitlement.

**Mr. McMorris:** — So I guess from your perspective then, you don't assume that there'll be any more because now it's up to the WCB to prove otherwise that there will be no more people covered through this legislation than what have been previously covered?

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — What this piece of legislation does is add the rebuttable presumption. And previously one of the concerns that was raised in Manitoba was that it had been dealt with in policy previously which is the same with the Saskatchewan WCB.

There is a policy on occupational disease where each case is viewed on a case by case basis. This adds the rebuttable presumption of . . . and that's the only change. It's not a different entitlement; it's just the presumption is there.

**Mr. McMorris:** — I just have one final question. The changes that would be made then to the WCB Act, what type of effect will it have, will there be any effect, or can you estimate any increase in employers' WCB rates? And those employers for the professional firefighters are municipalities. Will they be looking at any sort of increase in their rates due to the legislation being passed?

(15:30)

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — No, this will have no impact on the rates.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive agreed to.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

### THIRD READINGS

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

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

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

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

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

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

### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

#### General Revenue Fund Environment Vote 26

**Subvote (ER01)**

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

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. To my immediate right is Dave Phillips, assistant deputy minister of operations division. To my immediate left is our brand new deputy minister, Lily Stonehouse. I'd like to welcome Ms. Stonehouse to the team.

Directly behind me is Donna Johnson, and Donna is the director of financial management and planning. Of course next to Donna is Bob Ruggles, the assistant deputy minister for the programs division. And joining me, directly behind me in a few minutes, would be Mr. Ron Zukowsky, who is the executive director of policy and assessment division.

And behind the bar, other officials that are in attendance, Mr. Deputy Chair, is Wayne Dybvig, the vice-president of operations for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority; Joe Muldoon, the director of the environmental branch; Dennis Sherratt, the director of fish and wildlife branch; Janine Orban, the senior labour relations consultant; and Dave Tulloch, senior manager, strategic financial and performance management, fire management, and forest protection.

And say that three times, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Deputy Chair. Thank you very much.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I'd like to welcome the minister and his officials, and a special welcome to the new deputy minister.

Mr. Chair, to the minister, I'd like to ask some questions concerning his involvement in the Murdoch Carriere affair.

Mr. Chair, as everyone knows, Murdoch Carriere was the director of the fire management branch in Prince Albert who was harassing female employees for years. And last October, six of those female employees filed harassment complaints against Murdoch Carriere, Mr. Speaker. And at that time, the government hired an independent investigator who concluded in December that Mr. Carriere has been sexually harassing and intimidating female employees for years.

Mr. Chair, it is interesting to note that there was a memo written by the deputy minister on February 12, 2003 that Mr. Murdoch Carriere take a senior adviser position to the Environment department at \$85,000 a year.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to know, did the minister know of that decision at that time when it was taken?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. What I'll point out is that the . . . what normally . . . The normal process that applies is that when you have a situation as we did in reference to the gentleman in question, normally the process is that the minister does not hire or fire or discipline staff. Ministers are removed from that process, and it's clearly the deputy minister's role to undertake the necessary steps that the investigation would warrant.

I would point out that that's one of the reasons why the Public Service Commission minister, of course, was the minister that answered questions in this Assembly. And the process involved with the Public Service Commission as to dealing with the staffing issues, I would kindly ask you to direct those questions as to the process involved in reference to the individual you're speaking about.

I can tell you today that, as I've told the media on numerous occasions, that we did not try and intervene. We did not try and protect. So we didn't inject ourselves into any process. Why should we then turn around and prescribe penalty? We've made that statement on numerous occasions.

We were made aware, following the circumstances, that there was an investigation going on and there's a process in place, and as minister we refrain from injecting ourselves into that matter.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Chair, I have to disagree with the minister. I believe it's very relevant. The people of Saskatchewan want to know what involvement the Minister of the Environment had in this whole affair.

As it turned out, it has cost the deputy minister his job and of course, Mr. Murdoch, it cost him his job. I'd like to know a bit more information about the minister's relationship to Murdoch Carriere. I'd like to know how long has the minister known Murdoch Carriere?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. What I would point out is that we have had on numerous occasions the opportunity to clarify our role in this matter, and I believe that the people of Saskatchewan have seen the process unfold. But I think it's important for the Sask Party to continue, you know, their notion that, you know, this is a matter that the minister knew about and make all the accusations you want. Certainly there's processes in place, and we'll stand by those processes, and we'll continue standing by those processes. If I've got to stand up here 20 times today and tell you the same thing, I will.

But let me say this clearly, that in the relationship that we had with Mr. Carriere, he was obviously the fire manager. And Mr. Carriere travelled to a number of northern Aboriginal communities, of which Ile-a-la-Crosse was one of them, which is my hometown.

I knew Mr. Carriere, no question that we had a professional relationship. We've had many meetings, evening meetings, supper meetings. We've had discussions on the fire program, and the list goes on. Now he has been . . . of course been part of this program for many, many years, and he's had other . . . access to other ministers over previous years.

But I'll say this as well. While our relationship was good, the . . . we had a professional relationship. He clearly understood what his role was in terms of developing a fire program, and advises some of the, you know, staffing challenges, and we had discussions of that sort.

But in terms of the relationship — did I golf with Mr. Carriere, did I spend time at his home, did I go out for supper with his

family? The answer, as I said to the media, was no. But the professional relationship was there, and as a director of the fire program obviously he has to have a relationship with the minister. So you can continue trying to paint this in the fashion that you wish, but be forewarned that, clearly, we stepped aside and allowed the process to unfold. And I think it's very clear from this perspective that the process clearly had the minister not part of the process, and that clearly was what was undertaken.

(15:45)

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Just a few minutes ago, the minister of Public Service Commission announced that she had been sued by your former . . . the minister's former employee, Murdoch Carriere. Could the minister tell us what he is being . . . what he is suing for?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Once again, Mr. Chairman, I will point out that we're not about to speculate and we're not about to make any hypothesis as what individuals are doing. That's not my role here. I'm here to answer questions on environmental . . . the environmental budget for the government of Saskatchewan. I'm not here to respond to any lawsuits that may have been . . . that may have been delivered or developed.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Chair, to the minister. Well we know the minister of Public Service Commission is being sued by Murdoch Carriere. Could the minister tell us if he is being sued or any other members of the government is being sued by Mr. Carriere?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Once again, Mr. Chairman, I'm here to answer questions on the SERM's (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) budget. And, clearly, as I mentioned before, there's processes out there that are not related to the SERM budget and I'm not aware of them, and I'm not about to speculate or make any comments of any sort in reference to this matter.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Mr. Chair, on February 12, as I mentioned, the then deputy minister of Environment wrote a memo to all six women who complained about Murdoch Carriere. And in that memo the deputy minister said he had concluded that Murdoch Carriere had harassed these women, and the deputy minister indicated that Mr. Carriere would be assigned . . . reassigned with the Environment department.

Mr. Chair, on that same day, Mr. Chair, the deputy minister wrote to all the fire management and protection branch employees. And in that memo he announced Murdoch Carriere was being appointed senior adviser to the assistant deputy minister, beginning in May, and then he went on to praise Mr. Carriere for his leadership and valuable contribution to the branch.

It seems, Mr. Chair, that the handling of the minister and the handling of his department through this whole unfortunate circumstance has led to Mr. Murdoch being allowed to sue the department. The minister and the department mishandled it terribly and now we see that the minister of Public Service Commission is being sued the way it was handled.

So unfortunately this doesn't speak anything to the six women who were sexually harassed. Actually it was a slap in the face that this man was basically given a — well if not a promotion, certainly wasn't reprimanded in any way — and was given a senior advisory role to the deputy minister of the time.

And I'd just like to ask the minister again, was he not aware of what was going on in his department to know that this man was made the senior adviser to the assistant deputy minister?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Again I'll stand in my place and indicate that we did not intervene in the process. Obviously there's a number of Acts that preclude a minister from being engaged into matters of this sort. Everything from the confidentiality Act and of course the Public Service Commission, as well as The Occupational Health and Safety Act clearly states that in the event that this were to occur, the deputy minister is the man or is the individual that is to determine the course of action on this . . . on any other complaint.

As I mentioned before, we did not intervene to try and prevent or protect. So at the end of the day, in reference to the memo that you alluded to, why would we then prescribe penalty or try and intervene at that time? We're not privy to the details, so why should we make judgment? And that's one of the important rules here, is that the ministers are excluded from that process. We were excluded and this is clearly the role of the deputy minister to hand out, to hand out penalties and to follow the process that has been described through this whole challenge.

I think it important to note that we will continue following that process in the future. It is a fair process and clearly I think it is intended to point out that there be no political interference whatsoever. And there was none.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Minister, I'll try to keep this fairly brief; we just want some clarification. Apparently on Tuesday, April 29, Mr. Minister, there was a farewell reception, an informal reception for the former deputy minister. Could you be able to inform us if that farewell reception took place?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. Once again that member from Saskatchewan Rivers is misinforming the House. There was no function held for a farewell for the former deputy minister.

**Mr. Wiberg:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister, that's quite a bit of . . . That's quite a response being as that I never did ask that the . . . say to the minister that the reception had been held. I asked him if it was held. And I just wanted to point out to the minister, Mr. Chair, that this reception had been organized. Whether it was held or not is certainly I guess . . . and maybe not as much part of the discussion. But the fact is this reception was being organized and an invitation was sent out to all staff members for Environment and Resource Management, including the six females who had been vindicated at being harassed by Murdoch Carriere.

You can imagine, Mr. Minister, the feelings that must have went through their hearts and through their minds knowing that

they were being invited to a reception to . . . for a man who was not willing to step forward and make a powerful decision in regards to this very tragic situation.

So I just want to inform you, Mr. Minister, that this e-mail had gone out to every member of the staff and I wish that you would at this time, Mr. Minister, make a comment as to why any sort of a reception may have been . . . could have been held, was contemplating being held. And why in the world would you invite those women that had been sexually harassed, and not feel as though they were vindicated by the former deputy minister?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — There's no question that, Mr. Chairman, that as we all know, it is customary to hold a farewell get-together for staff that have seen other staff leave. And in this instance, I think, that custom was basically followed to a certain extent. Once we realized the sensitive nature of the farewell get-together, we decided that it would be not proper to proceed and it was immediately cancelled.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Another issue I would like to . . . that concerns Mr. Murdoch in his former job, but concerning the forest fire towers. I'd like to ask the minister the status of the forest fire towers in the North.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. Right now, for the member opposite, we built six new towers last year, and we had one pre-existing tower that was deemed safe from a structural point of view. So in total we have seven existing towers that we use.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, it's come to light that there's been an ongoing turmoil or problems in the department. And this is, I believe, when Mr. Murdoch was involved with the forest fire towers. My information says that Mr. Murdoch wanted to change the whole process of detecting forest fires and wanted to do away with the towers.

And we were told that the department had a study completed that said that the towers that exist today were adequate. He then commissioned another study just to get the answer that he wanted, and the answer he wanted was to knock down all the old towers and change the way of forest fire detecting from an aerial point of view.

And now we understand, Mr. Chair, to the minister, that some new towers have been built and the employees feel that they are unsafe and will not, I believe, will not go up into the towers. Could the minister please comment on that situation.

(16:00)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. Thanks very much for the question. What I would point out, that we did have a challenge with the fire towers as the member may or may not know. We've had about maybe 50 towers throughout Saskatchewan and last time they were built was in the '50s and the '60s. And there was a fire tower that was actually blown down in the P.A. (Prince Albert) area, and I believe it is P.A.

And what we done was we done a thorough assessment on all the towers as a result of that activity. And what we found out

that many of the towers didn't meet the modern requirements necessary for tower construction. So what we undertook was a thorough assessment and got an engineering company to do some of the work.

And we haven't had any indication yet as to the staff members who are just returning back to work now as to the concerns you raise about them not wanting to go into the tower. Obviously if there's some concerns, we will talk with them and we will check with them. But the staff are just getting back to work now and naturally if there is some concerns, we'll certainly work with them to try and address those concerns.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you. Mr. Chair, to the minister, how soon will a new director of forest protection be announced? How soon before you will appoint a new forest protection person?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I would point out that we anticipate by this fall we will have the fire program director in place.

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Mr. Deputy Chair, through to the minister, I'm just wanting to talk a little bit about the waste regions that have been created in the province and as well as the system that's out there, as well as the beverage collection system which is SARCAN, in the sense of how that whole process is working.

We've gone through some time. We've tried to create a waste collection system in the province and we've used the REACT (Regional Authority of Carlton Trail) system to determine if it's a viable system that we could put together.

REACT was given some provincial dollars to work with. They were 50 cent dollars for capital infrastructure that was put into place. And that money was given to them over a period of time to try and help offset some of the capital cost.

And REACT has experienced over that period of time that those capital, set-aside dollars have needed to be spent in the operating of that system; that the actual capital dollars aren't there to be used to replace capital that is needing to be replaced at this time as well.

We also have other regional systems that are trying to get up and get going, and they're finding some real difficulties in the sense of sourcing their dollars. And one of the real problems is the revenue that comes back in from the recyclable product, and the paper product is a real problem with the fluctuation of revenue values that come into that stream.

But I guess the question that I would like to ask is that whole area of SARCAN. When SARCAN was developed for the beverage containers, it was developed in the sense of collecting that product alone. And that whole industry has really grown and it's developed and it's generating some real revenues that come back into the general coffers of the government. There is some 6 to \$7 million that comes in as general dollars as well as — which are surplus dollars — as well as there's about 2 to \$3 million worth of value that comes in as unclaimed product that goes back into the general accounts as well.

And when you're looking at trying to create a recycling system in the province and you have those dollars that are being generated by one aspect of the recycling program, and you've got other parts of the program that are having trouble getting up and going through the municipalities, I just would like the minister to speak to that a little to see why we aren't recognizing the ability to use the surplus dollars from one part of the recycling system that can offset the cost of providing that recycling program in the rest of the province?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. It is indeed a very good question and I know the member has had a lot of background and certainly is keenly interested in the whole notion of waste management and the regional waste authority that we've been working towards. And I thank him for the question.

One of the things I think is very important is that in our role as environmental protectors, so to speak — regulators, if you will — we are often trying to find ways and means in which we could reduce environmental challenges that we face in the province of Saskatchewan. And some of the examples that the member spoke about, when you talk about REACT, you know, and for folks that aren't familiar with REACT, very quickly I'll give a history lesson here.

What we've done with REACT, which is a program of waste management around the Humboldt area, is to try and see if we can lessen the amount of landfills that are out in the province by looking at a wide variety of options that municipalities and different partners could utilize to reduce the landfill and of course the cost associated with that.

So they've done things like recycle as much of their garbage area as they can, manage their waste better, look at a scrap tire corporation taking away the scrap tires, looking at the bag-a-tag or tag-a-bag program. Like those are some of the things that SERM and the REACT project looked at. And mind you, this was a number of years ago but what we wanted to do was kind of have a model or a template of how we can apply the Humboldt REACT model right across the province.

The intent behind the whole notion of managing your waste areas for solid waste is really something that's admirable, I think, overall for the Saskatchewan people because you want to not see 7 or 800 landfills out there that aren't being regulated or monitored. You want to see them of course managed quite well.

So after we done the REACT, which of course was \$1.5 million worth of experimental work, we had to look at different stewardship models. And some of the stewardship models, again there we wanted to make sure we took out as much waste out of the landfill as possible and that's where you come with the scrap tire corporation, the used oil. And of course SARCAN enters in the picture; it takes away some of the cans and some of the other hazardous materials that are, that are also in our landfills.

And what we wanted to do was to try and reduce the amount of landfills throughout the province. And the REACT model talked about getting municipalities, towns, and villages, and RMs, and Indian bands, and resort villages working in a certain region collectively to try and reduce their waste, to try and reuse

some of the products they have and to try and manage their landfills better. And instead of having 20 in one given area, you'd have one. And our theory there is the economies of scale would make it more easier to manage our waste and then be more environmentally friendly.

And then you look at how we were going to help out in terms of, as a province, some of the initiatives that have been undertaken by many groups out there to which the member's familiar with. So then we started talking about the Centenary Fund. Perhaps what we should do is help finance some of these, some of these regional landfills that, you know, were trying to follow the REACT model. So then we went into the centenary program and we give \$575,000 per year to help with that theory, that we could certainly build together a better way of managing our waste.

And not only did we look at that, we also looked at some of the other challenges when you talked about the REACT model — how about protection of water, the water area in any given area; for example, the used oil. There's a lot of people that take, when they change oil in their vehicle at some of these service stations, they take that oil to a certain place. Now what happens if you have an abandoned service station in the middle of nowhere that is contaminating your water? Well that's a problem as well.

So what we've done was we've also looked at the abandoned service station aspect, as a government, to try and clean up those sites.

And as the member, as I've mentioned before, is acutely aware of some of the efforts we're trying to undertake through SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), being a former member of SUMA, is that we have had agreements with SUMA. And some of these agreements are close to \$1 million to try and look at cleaning up some of the abandoned service stations throughout the province.

So then you also look at some of the abandoned . . . some of the decommission costs of some of the landfills that we're trying to reduce as well. Because when you shut down a landfill, you don't just simply walk away from the landfill saying great we have this regional landfill in place, now this one over here we'll leave it continue in its natural state of littering the area and nobody's watching it, and of course the environmental challenges associated with that. So there's also cost for the cleanup of some of the abandoned landfills. And we went to about 6 or 700 landfills in the province. We've reduced them by roughly 80 to 85 less landfills in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so the REACT model has some very good lessons for us to learn. And you look at the stewardship models that we've implemented, you look at the Centenary Fund, you look at some of the abandoned service stations that we had to clean up in concert and in co-operation with SUMA and with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities).

Now we're looking at, you know, these decommissioning of some of the landfills that we've decommissioned. And you add up all those efforts over the last number of years and clearly what I'm trying to point out here is that SERM and . . . or Saskatchewan Environment has done a tremendous amount, a

tremendous amount of recognition of what SARCAN has done. So no, nobody's putting away money at the expense of SARCAN. We are expanding our program province wide to look at a wide variety of issues to try and make sure that we take a better . . . we become better stewards of our environment and of our lands.

So again, even simple things like we have 12 most contaminated sites in this province of Saskatchewan . . . there's 12 sites we've identified that are the most contaminated sites. And we are now working towards cleaning up six of the sites. And those cost a tremendous amount of money.

So you look at all the planning, all the policy development, all the programs in place, all the continual efforts that's necessary; then you throw in travel time for the staff; we throw in some of the policy development time; and this goes on every year on a continual basis. You can see that there is nobody ripping off any kind of environmental protection effort from any one particular sector. We are all sharing the load in trying to make rhyme and reason behind all of our collective efforts.

And clearly I believe, I believe at the end of the day, the sum of all our efforts and the power through our partnership, that Saskatchewan people can rest assured that this whole effort of trying to work with SARCAN, with regional landfills, learning the lessons from REACT, is that we are going to develop a better, sounder protection of our environment strategy than any other province in this country.

(16:15)

And furthermore, as we go down this path of trying to look at some of the options available, and much of our time, our staff time dedicated to this whole thing, it takes a tremendous amount of research and thought and travel. And I can go down the list if you'd like of the effort necessary to put forward a vision, a plan to acknowledge our partners and to pay them tribute, but more so to set broad goals and visions and objectives to point out that eventually, one of these days — and I'm going to go out on a limb here — that we're able to reduce our solid waste by up to 50 per cent within the next four, five, six, seven years.

And I think those laudable objectives that we have as the Government of Saskatchewan cost money. And I would say, sir, today, that that money, I think Saskatchewan people will say is well-spent.

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Mr. Deputy Chair, through to the minister. Thank you for that eloquent explanation I guess of the whole recycling program that we're trying to implement in the province as such, as well. But I think we're still missing the point that there is some serious dollars that SARCAN is generating on an annual basis.

When you talk about the centenary funding, there's \$2.3 million that went into a five-year program. So we're looking at about 500,000 or just about a half a million dollars that's coming out through the centenary funding, but that's only a five-year program. And it doesn't look after the decommissioning of the sites. So the decommissioning of the sites isn't, I guess, an area of responsibility that the centenary funding was going to be

looking after. That was the responsibility of the municipalities that they needed to look after that as well.

The minister talked about stewardship programs and I guess we need a stewardship program in the sense that we need to be responsible and be good stewards for the environment. And I think the minister and his department has put a no-burning regulation on the municipalities as well, and that's become somewhat of a responsibility of the municipalities now for not having, you know, all these midnight lightning striking and having the burning that goes on in the countryside as well.

But it also put some tremendous pressure on the municipalities of what to do with their product. The REACT system has developed a system where you're needing to collect this over a regional conceptual basis where some of these other municipalities haven't got that opportunity to be even belonging to a region. They've got 50, 80, 100 miles to travel to get rid of their product as well. And that's become a real hardship in the sense of some of these municipalities

There is a difference also between the urban and the rural Act in the sense of what type of system of collection that you have in the urban centres, as well as what you do in the rural centres. And that burning one is one, as well as the collecting of the product and how you handle that and deal with it. In that sense as well, there's a requirement through the urban Act that the municipalities is responsible to provide that service, where the rural Act is not required unless they have a certain, I think it's amount of 10 dwellings or as such in that regards.

But I guess we're still struggling to understand why we can't have those regions access those dollars. When you're talking about 6 to \$7 million a year that comes out of SARCAN and you're spending in the neighbourhood of maybe \$1 million a year in your other programs or thereabouts, why can . . . or why are we trying to start a program that we haven't got adequate funding to get it off the ground and get it going?

Again that paper . . . (inaudible) . . . program is one that we've all talked about. The minister had implemented an examination team about a year and a half to take a look at that whole process. There was a couple of meetings that were held — and SARCAN was part of that process as well — that talked about the opportunities of making some changes. But we needed some funding in there to make those changes.

And I think we need an explanation of why we can't go down that road and why we can't access those dollars to make those changes and take the pressure off some of these municipalities that the pressure's been put on through the legislation that was put into place.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. Once again I'm quite impressed with the member's knowledge of the system. Obviously the member has had exposure to the programs through SUMA.

And certainly what I would . . . take it under advisement from the minister, when he mentioned amendments to the municipal, especially The RM Act in terms of them having to collect and manage their landfills in a better . . . I don't believe that they have to now.

And that's one of the issues that the member has raised today and it's certainly one of the issues we can take forward to SARM, indicating that, at this stage of the game, having managed landfill is very important. And that may be part of our legislative agenda. If that member would support that, we would certainly go down that path and look at those options.

I would say that there's a lot of work that needs to be done. This is a work in progress. And as much as you want to say the programs that you are doing in other aspects only come to \$1 million, the answer is, no. There's clearly more costs than \$1 million per year.

So I think the other notion of the examination team was exactly that when we were approached by a number of folks telling us SARCAN has this stream dedicated to their organization; and then you have this stream dedicated to the Scrap Tire Corporation; and then you have this stream dedicated to the used oil industry; and then you have this stream dedicated to this organization, and the list goes on and on and on. And we're not asking the question of paper. Then all of a sudden we begin to say, well where do the regional landfills fit in for getting money from the provincial government to develop the regional landfills?

Because you have all these streams that are dedicated and then you have people burning their dumps, which they're not supposed to because of The Clean Air Act. Clearly I think when you burn at your landfills, you're not just burning paper and wood as the member knows. You're burning chemicals, you're burning paint, you're burning vinyl, and all these . . . Really those are noxious gases and those are materials that go into our air and certainly threaten the air quality of Saskatchewan.

So this is not an activity that we should condone, nor should we try and diminish in terms of the importance of us always realizing that you shouldn't be burning at your landfills. Now all that takes time, it takes education, I'll grant the member that.

But I'll say as well is that when we established the examination team, the intent there was to recognize good work done by regional landfills. And what I said at the time is there's all kinds of options. So instead of us coming along as a government, being heavy-handed and saying this is what you'll do, this is what you'll do, why don't you work together in a group and determine for me, as a Minister of Environment, what options are available to us as a government to implement, to assist you in your regional landfill's financial needs.

And when you do that, you engage all the partners. And I had spoke about power through partnerships. This is the whole intent behind the regional landfill concept is that you've got to have partnered communities.

And the premise behind the regional landfill — and I hope the member will agree with me — is that we can never in this whole world ever imagine us having zero costs for waste management. That is simply not on. We cannot have that.

So part of the process is to educate the RMs, the Indian bands, and the communities, saying, guys as much we think in a perfect world that we could recycle everything, we could sell all our tires in our landfill and it won't cost us any money to

operate our landfill even if there's 30 of us together — well we need to explain to them that we'll never achieve that. There's always going to be costs to managing your solid wastes. That's a principle behind anything we do with regional landfills.

So therefore when I go back to my earlier point, when I put the examination team, there are things like paints we need to look at. There are things like outdated information technology units, whether it's computers. There's pesticide containers that we're moving on as well. And there's other areas that we need to look at to try and make sure that we look at streams that could be available to help regional landfills.

But the premise again is that municipalities cannot expect zero costs in managing their solid waste.

What we're trying to do, in collaboration and in concert with them and all the other players out there, is to establish a vision and a common plan through policy development with SERM, and through continual support and seeking and reviewing all policy development issues and new opportunities. And that takes an incredible amount of work, and that also takes an incredible amount of money.

So we're continuing moving forward because as much as you may not want to admit it, it does cost us money to have a CO (conservation officer) travel out to the landfill and take the evidence of somebody burning at the landfill. It does cost money to have an environmental officer go out and monitor a certain area where landfills are operating. It does cost money to test water near landfills. It does cost money to collaborate in the event that there's a development happening near a water stream, that we also have to look at those costs.

So yes, you know SARCAN has done a tremendous job, but we look at them as being very valuable partners, and will continue going down this road of making sure we do all that we can to move forward on a laudable goal of having 50 per cent of our solid waste managed just through recycling and reducing and reusing as much as we can within the next five, six, seven, eight, ten, eleven years.

So anyway, Mr. Chairman, I think the goals are very clear. I think the member shares the goals, and rest assured we'll continue looking at all the options available.

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Again thank you to the minister for, I guess, explanation of some of the costs and some of the initiative that's been taken in trying to develop the whole recycling program.

And I don't think any of the municipalities out there are asking for zero costs in driving that whole system, but I think we've got to recognize that any of the payers in the system have already been taken out of the system. The beverage containers, there's revenue that's generated through them. Scrap Tire, there's revenue that's somewhat generated through the programs that they've developed. As far as the milk jugs are concerned, there's revenues that are being generated there as well. Same with the used oil.

So what's left in this system is the costly part of the operating of the recycling system. And that's where the burden seems to



be right now, with the municipalities, to carry that system on.

SARCAN produced a paper back about two or three years ago, and they took a look at that whole area of recycling. And they were looking at other opportunities that they could get involved in, in recycling different types of products within the system as well. And they were prepared to move down that whole area of recycling and taking other responsibilities on for recycling as well. And that paper never really has been released or has been talked about.

And when you talk to the people in SARCAN, they felt quite comfortable in the sense of what the opportunities there were to do some other recycling with some other products, that they could offset the cost of running that recycling program, that they wouldn't be just dead costs to the municipalities. It could be picked up through some of the revenues that SARCAN is generating.

Can the minister talk about that a little bit and see where that whole initiative that SARCAN had put forth, where that's heading.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. I just wanted to just quickly interrupt the Committee of Finance to introduce some folks back in my constituency.

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Is the minister requesting leave?

Leave granted.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. With us in the west gallery, we have a number of students from Pinehouse Lake.

And just to explain to the students what's happening right now is we have what they call committee of estimates and it's when each minister gets up and explains to the opposition what departments do on a number of fronts.

And with the Pinehouse Lake School we have Gloria Belcourt, Jennifer Smith, and Henri Iron as the chaperones and the teacher that are helping bring the students forward. And I am looking forward to joining the students at 4:45 and certainly having a conversation with them in my office.

So I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join us and welcome the students from Pinehouse Lake.

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

(16:30)

#### COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

##### General Revenue Fund Environment Vote 26

##### Subvote (ER01)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Mr. Speaker, I think one of the points that the member brought up in terms of the examination team, when we looked at the whole issue of trying to find some support — financial, some technical, perhaps some communication, and educational support — on the value behind the regional landfills, the examination team put together a number of recommendations. And SARCAN was clearly . . . And some of the examination committee's role . . . They come to the committee with probably the strongest recycling partner amongst the groups.

And there's other very strong recycling partners as well. And the member knows about the Scrap Tire Corporation, where nowadays they use all the tires throughout the province. When you and I buy a tire we pay \$3.50, I believe, for the tire. Where a trucker buys a tire, it may cost 10, \$12 to get the tire recycled. And then the Scrap Tire Corporation gets the money, and then they recycle these tires, marketing different products they can make from recycled rubber.

And one of the things that they've done — and this is a great credit to the Scrap Tire Corporation — is they have coarse mulched the rubber and they have used that for a base in a number of golf courses in the States, different arenas in the States. And what they've found out is that in the case of a golf course, when they put this mulched-up rubber tire under the grass greens, it's much easier to manage. There's less watering that is required. So it's really an efficient form of certainly supporting things like golf course bases.

So I guess my point being is that the Scrap Tire Corporation came up with this tremendous idea and now they're marketing that in the States. And we hope and we envision that eventually that we would have so much demand for some of the Scrap Tire Corporation's ideas of utilizing scrap tires that we would end up having no scrap tires in the province of Saskatchewan. That is the vision here.

And people say that's a far-fetched idea. Well let me assure you that it isn't. As we speak, Alberta's looking for a certain amount of tires that they could use in their efforts and they can't find them. So there's a demand that was developed and created by the Scrap Tire Corporation.

So that was the premise that I went to the partners as the Minister of Environment, saying, you guys have some great, fantastic ideas. So SARCAN and Scrap Tire Corporation, you know, I need you guys' help. And the phrase that I used, for the member's information — and SUMA and SARM are part of this equation — is I said, half of being intelligent is knowing what you're dumb at. And in this instance, as a minister, I was not privy to a lot of the efforts that they were undertaking, so I look to them for intelligence on this whole notion on recycling as much as we can and developing an opportunity for recycling.

So that being said, SARCAN, through their examination team, looked at a wide variety of options. They looked at plastics, they looked at bottles, they looked at cans, they looked at paper, they looked at everything that they could look in terms of examining some of the options. And the report is several years old. And we have in fact responded to a number of recommendations. And most of these recommendations right now is really around the awareness and the sharing of

intelligence and knowledge-based efforts, best practices, and that kind of thing. We haven't really done a whole lot in some of the other areas that they've asked us to undertake action on.

But that's not to say that we have not learned any lessons from the examination team. We will continue moving forward, but one of the most valuable partners in this whole exercise is of course the industry that we're going to impact. So consultation has to happen with that particular industry as well.

On the final note on the paper argument. I believe paper, if I can be corrected, is probably the largest, if you will, occupier of our land masses or of our landfills throughout Saskatchewan. It fills a fairly large mass on our landfills. And people are saying that the price of paper is so low that it ain't worth recycling so we're not going to do it. It costs us money to recycle and that's why we can never get money for our regional landfills.

Well I hate to point this out — it's not something that I admit often — but the price of paper cannot be dictated by Saskatchewan alone because the volume of paper that we consume in Saskatchewan is relatively small compared to the other jurisdictions. Our heart and our minds and our vision and our dreams are big, but our paper use is small. So we cannot artificially inflate the price of paper by our volume numbers, so obviously some of these options presented to us do pose some other risks and other challenges. And our job here is to make sure that we're able to look at these options thoroughly and move forward from here.

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Minister, for I guess again giving us the understanding and maybe a little bit of the background and knowledge of what's happening with that system.

But I think with SARCAN the question still needs to be asked if SARCAN has some interests and wants to take the initiative on to make some changes in the system. And you're recognizing that SARCAN is a very valuable player in the whole recycling program, the same with Scrap Tire. SARCAN's hours are being cut back and the days are being cut back in the sense of the opportunity that people can access that program as well.

And I just would like the minister to speak to that a little bit, and in the sense of why we're seeing that that whole opportunity to be able to access the SARCAN program is being diminished in the province as well.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. I'd like to reiterate and re-emphasize that SARCAN is a very valuable and valued partner. There's no question that any time you see a organization that has grown and expanded to the effective size that SARCAN is, as the member very well knows, that always when you look at efficiencies of operation, a board — and SARCAN's not immune to that — they look at ways in which they can make their organization efficient and thereby saying . . . Well in a sense I'm saying that some of these decisions that they're making, I would point out that there's probably two or three reasons why they're doing it. One is, obviously is efficiency. And the other is they may be taking on some new programs and new planning.

So I think what I would point out, there's been no centres

closed — obviously that's something that's very important — that I'm aware of. They're also involved with a pilot project in reference to some of the computers, the old computers I was speaking about.

They take all the beverage containers. They take all the milk containers — they're working with the dairy producers on that front — and they aren't making any money on that particular aspect. It's really, you know, an effort by their organization to try and address the milk containers argument. And through contractual obligations and discussion, this year we've increased our operating grant by well over a half a million dollars. So it is valuable in the sense of what they're doing. They're doing a lot of extras which is much appreciated by this minister and by the province of Saskatchewan. But as I mentioned before, like any other organization, they have to look at constant improvements, new programs, efficiencies, and that's a decision that they could certainly make on their own. And we will continue supporting SARCAN as much as we possibly can.

**Mr. Lorenz:** — Mr. Chair, thank you again to the minister for that answer. But I think there is still that concern. There are communities such as Davidson and Wilkie and Macklin that are being cut in hours and cut in days. And if we have the interest in enhancing this service to delivery that is being provided by SARCAN, we need to recognize that if they're going to get into the servicing of these other products, that you've got to give them the abilities to provide the hours and the manpower to provide that service as well.

And I think if we're going to work with that system in the fullest and allow it to develop, you can't start handicapping them and taking hours and days away from them to be able to provide the service as well.

Just wanting to go back to the landfill situation, and I guess the way we've tried to regulate and control that whole burning aspect out there . . . And until we develop the regional concept and have the regions developed and have that full-access ability for these municipalities to get into that regional delivery of service, we need to somehow appreciate how that regulation is going to work with these municipalities and how some of these pressures are going to come down upon them — that in some fashion they still have to function. And sometimes burning still is an acceptable process in the sense of getting rid of that product.

Now there maybe needs to be a bit of separation in there. And we can recognize that we shouldn't be burning everything out there but there's a certain amount of product that needs to be burnt and dealt with in the respect of not having the ability of a regional facility that you can get access at.

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much. Again, Mr. Chairman, you can obviously tell that the member's had some extensive experience in this particular field. And it is always a breath of fresh air to see a Saskatchewan Party member have extensive experience and background on certain aspects of what SERM does.

But I would point out, I think it's important that we continue striving home the fact that burning at landfills is something that

shouldn't be condoned. Obviously I think the member knows that the activity does happen and there has been some tremendous progress that has been made.

But I would say this, is that SERM, through an educational awareness campaign, does allow burning at landfills when you look at certain aspects of the conditions of the weather and so on and so forth. So burning is allowed and it is permitted under certain circumstances, and we would ask the members to look at a permitting system before they're allowed to burn. Obviously we don't want to see things like butane bottles and paints and other chemicals being burned as a whole. So there's good separation of dry brush and old lumber that isn't being used, and other things that could be burned. Then we would ask that the municipalities get a burning permit and we work very closely with them.

And I'll point out in closing that there's been good, tremendous progress made on that front. And it is not in our desire, nor is it in our ambition, to charge and be unfair to the municipality partners out there. I talked about a partnership, but it's been the regional landfills, it's been the certain organizations out there and other folks that have asked me, what's the use of pushing regional landfills if the communities are allowed to burn; so, Mr. Minister, get on those communities that burn.

And it is not our desire or objective to charge people of Saskatchewan. That's not what I'm here for. So through education, to working with them, to awareness campaigns, and eventually if they don't follow through with what the regional landfills go, we do have to, you know, slap a few folks on the wrists and tell them, come on, folks, you know we got to get with this program. So that's the only time that we've done a few . . . we laid a few charges, but it's not a preferred option.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, I've a couple of questions that hopefully have short answers to, and it relates to some water issues. And although this is from the urban municipal Act, I want to read a quote from section 144 of the urban municipal Act. And it states:

*. . . The Environmental Management and Protection Act, 2002 and The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority Act, a council may, by bylaw, regulate and control the use of wells and other sources of supply water for the urban municipality, make provisions for a supply of water for the urban municipality . . . flowing through or past the urban municipality.*

My question to the minister is: does Saskatchewan Environment have a law that supersedes this?

(16:45)

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. And to the member, I think one of the terminology in any Act, the urban Act or the northern Act, is that the terminology may and will and shall have certainly different meaning to it.

And in this instance, I would point out that the may in the Act was probably designed to anticipate that The Environmental Management and Protection Act, the EMPA Act which is a provincial Act, would supersede that Act in the event that

public health was a threat . . . or public health was a threat.

And I think in this instance, I would say that Saskatchewan Environment does have the EMPA Act which would supersede a notion by a local council that they would not, say, for example, treat your water if they're providing water services to their community. So I guess my point being is that that's probably the logic behind the terminology, may.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well thank you. My next question again is a short question and from pamphlets that you have left, your department has left, it says that Saskatchewan Environment is responsible for water systems designed to deliver 4,000 gallons per day or more.

Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — I'll try and keep this answer as short as I can. The system is a municipal supply or a volume higher than 4,000 gallons a day. It is managed under EMPA.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Now the reason that I bring this up, we have a village or a small hamlet, whatever you wish to call it — it's under the urban municipal Act — that have received a citation or a violation notice from Saskatchewan Environment.

This town has something in the neighbourhood of 19 people. The water is not provided by the town; it's provided by individual wells. The consumption of water in this town is no more than 1,000 gallons a day, and yet they received a notice of violation. And it says further violation may result in court action.

And the town is basically saying it's not even their water supply. Would you like to comment on why they would receive a violation order?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the information. I believe the community, if the member . . . If I'm wrong, I ask the member to correct me. It's under Wood Mountain, and if that's the village you're referring to, I believe that they have a community well, or a well that is serving the communities . . . or the homes, if I'm correct. Now if these systems are considered a municipal system, then they come under EMPA.

But what I would caution that member on — and I realize the member has got a lot of information on the water file; he's been working this for a couple of years — is be very, very careful. Because what I want to point out is that, to a lot of folks, is we've had a challenge with water quality throughout the province.

And we always, on this side of the House, making sure that folks know that treatment of your water is so very crucial. We want to make sure that everybody across Saskatchewan knows that, if your water is not treated, then you need to get it treated ASAP (as soon as possible). You need to advise your folks and you have to get your water tested on a regular basis.

So what we're trying to do there is to educate people because the worst case scenario were to happen — and I'm hoping that

member's not suggesting that — that if you don't treat your water, if you don't treat your water, then people get sick. And when people get sick, there could be serious consequences as a result of that, and we don't want to ever see that again happen in Saskatchewan. That is a challenge that all of us in this Assembly face.

Now it is not again in our interest to charge Saskatchewan people. And a notice of violation, for the member's information, is much like a speeding ticket, or a speeding infraction where often . . . I'm not sure if the member ever got stopped for speeding, but if you did, then what they say is they say: well slow down here a bit; I'll give you a break, but here's a . . . here is a warning.

So a notice of violation is much like a warning that you have to make sure you get your water treated. If it's a municipal system and is a threat to public safety, then we have to make sure that people know it is not being treated, and we do our very best, our best efforts to make sure that it gets treated. And of course that works with, with the community as well, we have to work with them. And we have to make sure that public health is not threatened.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a follow-up on that question. I have a village of Keeler which has 10 people in it. Same problem — they're going to be cited because they don't chlorinate the water. Obviously they just don't have the money. I mean you know how much tax base you're going to generate with 10 people.

Next argument you might get up and say, well they can join the RM, but the RM still has to pay for that. There is Hutterite colonies out there. I have individual farms out there that probably have more than 10 people in the house of their own well water.

How low on the town system do you go? If even Keeler drops to five people, will they still be falling under the same rules that follow under a town or a village of 500 to 1,000 people? And individual farms that don't fall under any rules or Hutterite colonies or . . . out there in rural Saskatchewan?

Concern there is they do send their water in once a week to be tested voluntarily, but they just can't afford the systems that you're bringing . . . that you want to put forward, that's saying they have to bring them in. Will there be any help for these towns in that small of shape, or RMs?

**Hon. Mr. Belanger:** — Thank you very much for the question. And I'd remind that member, whether it's 10 people or 5 people or 20 people or 20,000 people or 200,000 people, we are concerned with human life and we'll continue being concerned. And we're going to implement our Act and make sure that we protect the public, or the public safety is protected.

I would point out that this system that you are referring to is considered a municipal system. And what you have to be very careful — whether it's Wood River or whether it's any of the smaller communities — is that if they're considered a municipality, they're eligible for the CSIP (Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program) program to apply.

And secondly, and the most important, alarming thing that we're worried about is perhaps some of these systems . . . and I can confirm today, I understand that some of them may have bacteriological problems and challenges with their water supply.

So I'd urge that member to be very careful because what you don't want to do is you don't want to propose to have lax laws when it comes to smaller communities. We still have to work with them, we still have to be cognizant of their financial challenges, but if there is a threat to public safety, we will be engaged.

Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:57.



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