

The Assembly met at 13:30.

The Deputy Clerk: — I wish to advise the Assembly that Mr. Speaker will not be present to open today's sitting.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the deplorable and unjustifiable 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.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Carlyle, Bellegarde, and the city of Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to rise with a petition from citizens of rural Saskatchewan who are very concerned about 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 in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Rockglen.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I rise today to present a petition from people from west central Saskatchewan concerned with the state of health care. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure continuation of the current level of services available at the Kindersley Hospital and to ensure that current specialty services are sustained to better serve the people of west central Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Smiley and Kindersley.

I so present.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a petition signed by residents of the province of Saskatchewan regarding Highway 49 from Kelvington to Highway 35. The petition notes that there is an urgent need of construction repair and without it future economic development in the area will be hindered and safety imperilled. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 49 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in the area.

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

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Okla, Kelvington, and Lintlaw.

And I'm pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today I'm standing to present a petition on behalf of citizens from the community of Cabri concerning the issue of Crown grazing land renewals. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Deputy Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of constituents concerned with a section of Highway 22 between the Junction of No. 6 and Junction 20. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

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

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a petition here today dealing with the Crown land leases and the handling by this government. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are from Spiritwood, St. Walburg, Mildred, Glaslyn, Hafford, and Glenbush.

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 papers nos. 10, 12, 35, 36, 40, 90, and no. 100.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Corrections and Public Safety: for fiscal year 2001-2002, what was the total overtime cost at each of the province's four correctional facilities; and further to that, for the same fiscal year what was the budgeted overtime cost for each facility?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have a similar question for fiscal year 2002-2003.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Corrections and Public Safety: what were the total costs associated with the facility lockdown following the March 16, 2003 escape of five inmates from the Regina Correctional Centre; and further to that, what were the cost breakdowns?

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 42 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for SPMC: did the corporation commission any feasibility or business plan or consultant's report for the sound stage located at the corner of Broad Street and College Avenue in Regina; if so, will the minister table copies of those documents in the legislature?

Mr. Speaker, there's similar questions for the Minister of Industry and Resources and the minister for Crown Investments Corporation.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have a very special guest — two special guests — in your gallery,

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I want to introduce to the House today.

Former Capitol recording artist, Stu Mitchell, in some regards a rock and roll legend, recorded at the famous Norman Petty Studio in Clovis, New Mexico, along with Buddy Holly. Stu Mitchell is with us in the gallery today.

And those who will have memory of the great dance hall traditions will — here in Regina at least — would remember the many engagements that Stu played at the Regina Trianon Ballroom.

With Stu is his son, Kyle, who is a stage, movie, and television actor, who some will recognize starred in the Global series, *Jake and the Kid*.

Stu and Kyle are on a rediscover your roots tour through Saskatchewan. They visited the homestead where Stu's parents lived at Mervin, and the Clover Lake School where Stu's mother attended as a child. And they've been to Waskesiu and Prince Albert, Stu's hometown of Saskatoon, and now here to Regina.

And so I'd ask all members to welcome these two guests to our Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well, on behalf of the official opposition, we'd like to welcome Stu Mitchell and his son back to the province as they discover their roots.

And I'm certain that over the years we'll probably hear much more of them and their music and their acting. And we certainly welcome them to this province and wish them well in their future endeavours.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Hon. members, it's my great pleasure . . . Once again it is orientation day in visitor services. Of the six tour guides working the summer schedule, three of them are returning this year and three are brand new.

We welcome back Shawn Keough, if Shawn could give a wave; Salema Forrest, if she could give a wave; and Sonia Millette, if she could give a wave. And joining this team . . . the team this year are Jonathan Epp, Ryan Malley, and Jesse Michaud.

The summer staff join our full-time guides, Arnold and Theresa — Arnold, if you could wave; I think Arnold's on the right and Theresa's on the left — in greeting our many visitors and providing tours of the Legislative Building through our summer season.

Lorraine and Marianne are also very proud of this fine team. The guides are excellent ambassadors, not only for our beautiful Legislative Building, but also for our province. And I know all hon. members would like to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Humboldt Broncos Win Royal Bank Cup

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, Mr. Speaker, this was a jubilant weekend for the sport of hockey. Canada won gold at the World Men's Hockey Championship in Helsinki. And more importantly, the Humboldt Broncos tasted something this past Sunday that a Saskatchewan Junior A hockey team hasn't tasted in 15 years. And that, Mr. Speaker, was sweet victory at the Royal Bank Cup in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Julé: — So, Mr. Speaker, the Broncos are heading home to Humboldt as the exuberant and proud national champions. Finishing tournament play with a 2-2 record, the Broncos went on to defeat the Wellington Dukes 3 to 2 in the semifinals, pitting the Broncos against the Camrose Kodiaks in the Sunday's final.

And what a final it was, Mr. Speaker. Everyone was glued either to the radio or to TV watching this game. Humboldt took an early lead in that game, with two goals in the first period by Matt Brown and Kris Kasper. Camrose responded late in the first period and after a pointless second period, Brown scored on an empty net in the final seconds of the game.

This, Mr. Speaker, is the Bronco's first appearance in the RBC (Royal Bank Cup) finals since 1987. The community of Humboldt will be welcoming the Broncos home tonight with festivities at the Humboldt Uniplex at 11:30 p.m.

And I'd like to ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating the Humboldt Broncos; the players; the coaches, Bob Beatty and Dean Brockman; and the staff on their 3-1 victory over Camrose. And, Mr. Speaker, I would invite all members of this House to maybe travel to Humboldt tonight to welcome the Broncos home.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Wide Open Week

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, May 12 to 16 is Saskatchewan Wide Open Week, or WOW. The week is a collaborative effort between the public and private sectors and is designed to complement the province's Future is Wide Open campaign.

Saskatchewan WOW will get underway with two innovation showcases, the first in Regina on Tuesday and the second in Saskatoon on Thursday, where a host of manufacturers will showcase their successful products and services. Also in Regina on Tuesday and Saskatoon on Thursday, Jim Bottomley, a marketing specialist, will deliver a luncheon presentation on how smaller centres can compete against big cities and succeed using cluster strategies.

At Regina Exhibition Park on Wednesday, the Saskatchewan-Made Products Trade Show and Sewn-Products

Showcase will feature an incredible array of Saskatchewan-made products that are available from provincial manufacturers.

And on Thursday, the Saskatchewan Research Council will lead about 1,500 grade 4, 5, and 6 students in Canada's biggest science experiment. The experiment will take place in Regina and Saskatoon simultaneously and could have great benefits for the energy and environment sectors.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan has a lot to say wow about. With 12 straight months of job increases, with growing sectors like oil and gas, with mining and forestry building momentum, we truly have a future that is wide open.

And so I urge everyone to celebrate our businesses and people during Saskatchewan Wide Open Week.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

National Police Week

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're on the job 365 days a year, 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. To this group of dedicated men and women there's no such thing as 8 to 5 with evenings and weekends off. They're usually the first ones we turn to for help if there's been an accident or disaster of any kind. In fact, we're so confident in their training, skills, and abilities, that not only do we entrust them with our own personal safety but also the safety and protection of our children, our communities, and our province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm of course referring to the loyal and hard-working members of Saskatchewan's police forces. And today I ask all members of the House to join me with recognizing May 11 to 17 as National Police Week.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the idea behind National Police Week is to increase community awareness and recognition of policing services while strengthening police-community ties. And it is clear that here in Saskatchewan our police forces have repeatedly proven just how integral their actions and their services are to our communities.

From La Ronge in the North, to Lafleche in the South, from Kamsack in the East to Kerrobert in the West, Mr. Speaker, we take comfort in knowing that the hundreds of brave and loyal members of our province's police forces are on the job.

(13:45)

We'd be remiss, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we didn't also note that most of this work is done under adverse conditions and is often taken for granted or simply dismissed.

To the police forces across Saskatchewan during National Police Week and for the other 51 weeks of the year, from all members of the House, our sincere thanks and appreciation for a job well done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Great Weekend for Saskatchewan Hockey Players

Mr. Trew: — Wow, what a great weekend for hockey, particularly for Saskatchewan hockey players. First of all, Mr. Speaker, there were five players with Saskatchewan connections on Team Canada that won the World Hockey Championship in Helsinki yesterday.

Jamie Heward of Regina stepped in at defence in the final game and just played a rock-steady game. Patrick Marleau of Aneroid had a particularly strong game in the semi-final to get Team Canada to the gold medal game. And Team Canada members Kyle Calder, Ryan Smith, and Barry Trotz all played their junior hockey right in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, slightly different, the Humboldt Broncos are this year's Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League champions and wow — wow — they won the 2003 Royal Bank Cup tournament yesterday to become the Canadian Junior A champions.

The Broncos were lead by their captain, Matt Brown, who scored first and last in the final game against Camrose, Alberta, Kodiaks to help the Broncos to their 3-1 victory. Kris Kasper scored the winning goal.

Also deserving mention are the Broncos' assistant captain, Craig Olynick, who was named the tournament's most valuable player and the tournament's top defenceman, and Jeremy Wray, who played the entire tournament with a broken wrist.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating Team Canada and the Humboldt Broncos on their respective championships. Wow.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recognition of Nurses

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this week is National Nurses Week and I would like today to recognize the importance of nurses and the essential work that they do.

Mr. Speaker, nurses are the nucleus of our health care system. Without them the system falls apart, waiting lists grow, surgeries get cancelled, and hospital beds close. The shortage of nurses in Saskatchewan adds to the workload and stress of those who work in our system. And as a result, many nurses are looking for early retirement or leaving the province, or are simply leaving the profession altogether.

Mr. Speaker, over the next five years Saskatchewan will lose almost 40 per cent of the nurses. By the year 2012 it is projected that 60 per cent of our current nurses will no longer be nursing at all. Mr. Speaker, these statistics are alarming.

The nursing shortage is only going to increase despite an interest in the profession by many young people. Last year almost 800 students applied for the nursing program but only 260 seats were available. Many were turned away. The lack of training seats forced them to leave the province and go elsewhere.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, we lose young people now and many will not return. Mr. Speaker, not only do we as a province need to expand nursing education seats, we need to give young people encouragement to stay in this province and work in the health care field.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party values nurses, and if elected, we will deliver on the quality workplaces that this government promised in 1999. I'd like to ask all members to join me in thanking and recognizing the value of nurses.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On a different note. Registered nurses, registered psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners, and licensed practical nurses are all valued members of the health care system, and they play an important role in delivering quality health care in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as this is International Nursing Day, this is their day and their week, and the first day of International Nursing Week. I would like to take this opportunity to honour these important health care providers. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this year's theme, Nursing: At the heart of health care, is well chosen.

Nurses are on the front lines of health care services and are committed and dedicated to the people who need their special care, expertise, and compassion. Every day we see powerful examples of nurses working in every area of the health care system — from attending to a sick newborn in a neonatal intensive care unit, to nursing an older person through home care services, to assuming a leadership role in providing primary health services across the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I extend my best wishes for a successful celebration of International Nursing Day and Week. And I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking the nurses for their dedication, commitment, and contribution to quality health care in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Chancellors' Scholarship Awarded to Eston Area Student

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is with great pleasure today to applaud the achievements of a young woman from the Eston area. Alana Ormsby is a grade 12 student at the Eston Composite School and was recently awarded the Chancellors' Scholarship from the University of Saskatchewan.

Alana was one of 15 successful applicants to receive the \$20,000 bursary with a high school average of 98.1 per cent. The awards were presented by John Manley at a luncheon held at the university in late April.

Not only does Alana excel at academics, but will attain her teacher's status in dance this spring, has her grade 8 in piano, was a member of the Eston senior girls curling team, which placed fifth in the high school provincial curling championships this year, and she was a member of the Eston school drama,

which received a certificate of merit for their effort at the provincial drama festival held recently in Regina.

Alana plans to obtain a math-science degree and then look at options for the future, further education here in Saskatchewan.

I'd ask all members to join me in congratulating this outstanding young woman and wishing her every success with her future endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Contract Negotiations with Medical Profession

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Health. Over the weekend Saskatchewan doctors rejected the province's latest contract offer. However, the president of the Saskatchewan Medical Association said that the SMA would stay at the bargaining table. He said they wanted to resume negotiations as soon as possible. But now some media outlets are reporting that the two sides will not return to the bargaining table until after an emergency meeting by the SMA tomorrow night.

Mr. Speaker, it is in the best interests of the health care system and of the people of Saskatchewan that a fair settlement is reached with the province's doctors and that job action is averted.

Is this just a short break, Mr. Speaker, in the process, to allow this meeting of the SMA to go ahead, and will the two sides resume negotiations Wednesday morning? Will the minister please explain to the people of Saskatchewan what the status of contract negotiations with the SMA is?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. On Thursday I had dinner with members of the SMA. On Friday I spoke to the SMA and answered questions for quite a length of time and had a very fruitful time with them, talking about all of the issues in the province.

On Friday I said very clearly to the press that our people were ready to talk with the SMA Friday, Saturday, Sunday, or Monday, and basically they then met as a group on Saturday morning and they've now been in contact with the people who represent the Government of Saskatchewan.

These discussions take place in formal places, they take place in informal places, but the talks continue because I know the doctors and the government and the whole health system want to resolve this matter in a way that's fair for the doctors but also fair for Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, job action by the province's doctors is of concern. But so is the idea that health interns and residents at the University of Saskatchewan are also considering job action in an effort to speed up their contract negotiations.

Members of the Professional Association of Internes and Residents have been without a contract for 16 months and are the lowest paid interns and residents of any university residency training program in Canada.

It seems ironic that the issue of recruitment and retention of doctors in Saskatchewan is a big part of what the SMA wants addressed by the government, yet this government has let negotiations with the doctors we are actually training in this province drag out for 16 months. The interns and residents are now saying that they may join the SMA in job action, not only to support the province's doctors, but also to speed up their own contract negotiations.

So my question: will the minister explain the status of contract negotiations with the province's residents and interns?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the contract negotiations with the interns and residents takes place between their organization, PAIRS (Provincial Association of Internes and Residents of Saskatchewan), and the University of Saskatchewan. And so that discussion takes place there.

But it's very clear that a number of the issues that relate to these graduate doctors who are doing their internships and their residencies do tie in with the SMA discussions. So practically they know that a number of the things that will be resolved at the SMA table will also be dealt with at the PAIRS table.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday I talked to a number of the representatives from PAIRS. They are in the process of getting these matters resolved through the negotiating table. We will address the issues for them in the same way that we'll address the issues for the doctors because they're all valuable members of our health care system and it's important that we get these things resolved in a way that satisfies all of Saskatchewan people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Water Levels in Qu'Appelle Lakes

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority took out an advertisement in Saturday's edition of the *Leader-Post* outlining the dispute between a number of First Nations and the federal government. The dispute is over access to water control structures on the Qu'Appelle River system.

According to the government advertisement and previous government news releases dated April 17, failure to resolve this dispute will result in serious decline in water levels this summer on Pasqua Lake, Echo Lake, Mission Lake, Katepwa Lake, Crooked Lake, and Round Lake, Mr. Speaker.

What is the minister doing to intervene in this dispute to ensure water levels in the Qu'Appelle Valley?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I have before me, Mr. Speaker, is we've had letters that we've sent to the Hon. Robert Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs, from myself advising of the situation. We have a letter going to the Hon. Ralph Goodale, the federal minister, also talking to him about some of the challenges that we have met, and some of the challenges that have been met on this particular matter.

We have also got a letter going out to David Millette, the director of negotiations for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and this is coming from the president of the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority, talking about some of the need to resolve this matter ASAP (as soon as possible).

And one of the things I think is very important, Mr. Speaker, is that we point out to the people of the Qu'Appelle Valley Indian Authority and the people affected that this is a very serious matter. We're on top of the issues. And what I would ask the member of the opposition, that Sask Party, is besides sitting back criticizing and complaining, is don't compromise the provincial government when it comes to discussions by insisting that we pay some of the costs associated with settling this tremendous challenge. We are working very hard, we'll continue working hard, and don't interfere.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the lakes along the Qu'Appelle River system play a critical role in economic development around the Qu'Appelle, Fort Qu'Appelle area. Lakes such as Pasqua Lake, Echo Lake, Crooked Lake, Round Lake, are major tourist destinations. The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority says that if the water management structures are not operating soon, water levels along those lakes can drop as much as a metre or more throughout the summer.

And yet it appears that the federal government and First Nations have stalled. All we hear from this minister is that they sent a few letters saying, we're concerned, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister guarantee that they will get to the table and help resolve this dispute before the economic structure in the Qu'Appelle Valley system is severely affected?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what this minister will guarantee is that this government will not be paying federal government bills when it comes to this whole matter. And I would ask that member across the way, besides whining and complaining and moaning every time this government does something, is if he's prepared, if he's prepared to pay the federal government bills. Then that Saskatchewan Party opposition should stand up in their places and say, our solution is to pay the federal government bills.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we are going to protect Saskatchewan government's interests, we are going to work with all the parties involved, and we're not going to compromise this government and the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in the communities of Fort Qu'Appelle, Lebret, and B-Say-Tah are looking for answers, not excuses that that minister has just given. But today it looks like all they're going to get from this provincial government is a couple of letters and a cold shoulder — it's somebody else's fault. If the water levels along the Qu'Appelle River drop to projected levels, more than a metre this next summer, fish stocks will be threatened, tourism will be devastated, and local business owners throughout the valley will have to pay a heavy price because of this government's inaction.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, what assurances can the NDP (New Democratic Party) give cottage owners, residents, and businesses in the Qu'Appelle Valley that they're doing something other than sending letters to guarantee the water levels will be at their correct levels through the rest of the summer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I would point out is that we have taken a very proactive position on this matter. We have sat down with QVIDA (Qu'Appelle Valley Indian Development Authority), Mr. Speaker. We have asked them . . . we will sit down and talk to you about a water management strategy. We've written letters to our federal counterparts. We've engaged in a number of groups. We've advertised the challenge we may face this summer, Mr. Speaker. We have not hidden anything on this particular challenge.

But what I'll point out is that opposition is standing here today and I would ask that member, I would ask that member . . . On this side of the House we're saying we are not going to settle and pay off federal government bills. This is our position on this side. Now I want to ask that member from the Saskatchewan Party, that member from the Saskatchewan Party, if he is prepared to pay the federal government bills. If he is, stand up in his place and say so, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the impact of falling water levels on the Qu'Appelle Valley system is devastating to local businesses and local communities throughout the Qu'Appelle Valley system, and all we're getting from this government is, it's somebody else's fault.

I challenge the minister to earn his paycheque, call the parties together, and make sure they understand the impact that falling water levels have in this province and in the Qu'Appelle Valley.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — We have maintained that this particular challenge is of a significant risk to a number of tourism opportunities in the area. We have advised the cabin owners and the cottage owners of all the challenges that we're going to face. We have engaged with QVIDA in terms of discussion on water

management.

We are fully aware of the issues. We are corresponding with the national government and a number of ministers involved with this particular circumstance. And we agree with all that — it is devastating.

But my question to that member, to that Sask Party opposition, once again doom and gloom and whine and moan, Mr. Speaker — no solution. On our side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we are going to protect Saskatchewan people's interests. We're going to work with the First Nations involved. We're going to make sure people are aware of what's happening, Mr. Speaker.

And the question I have of them is, do you believe that we should pay the federal government's bills in this regard? Yes or no, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Promotional Activities

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, we'd like to congratulate the Minister Responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) today, who apparently he's been just named the minister responsible for government golf ball distribution in the province of Saskatchewan as SPMC, Mr. Speaker, will now be distributing government golf balls around the province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the minister: how much money has the NDP government budgeted to spend on government golf balls this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appreciate the question because obviously it's very near and dear to the heart of the members in opposition, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There are promotions that our Crown corporation carry out, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite know that very well, as SaskEnergy, SaskTel, all our Crowns have promotions. They put aside in their budgets monies for promotions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I think this is part of doing business. Those are the Crown corporations that do very well on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think the minister of SPMC thinks that — he's not sure, but I think he believes — his Crown corporation, SPMC, is distributing government golf balls or SPMC balls.

But, Mr. Speaker, the truth of it is they're only going to be distributing them for The Future is Wide Open campaign. According to an internal government memo obtained by the Saskatchewan Party, every government department and Crown has been ordered to start putting the NDP's The Future is Wide Open slogan on every piece of government communications — that's highway signs, park entrance signs, book covers, bill inserts, liquor store signs, Mr. Deputy Speaker, liquor board signs as well, and government cheques, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The question is this: how many taxpayers' dollars are going to be spent on this particular branding initiative on putting this slogan on all the government signs? And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm whether or not the government will be selling these golf balls or will they be giving them away for free, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not have privy the cost of placing the Wide Open Future logo on a variety of government publications. We'll get that information for the member.

But let me say this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I am prepared to stand any platform in this country, any town hall in this province, in this legislature, and say to the people of Canada and the people of Saskatchewan, the future of this province is a wide open future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as the member indicates, if in fact that the Wide Open Future will be declared on welcoming signs to our province, if the Wide Open Future will be displayed on government publications, Mr. Speaker, I support it. I don't oppose it; I support it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Wow, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Premier has it half right. The future for this province will very much be wide open, just as soon as he calls an election and the government is replaced, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this internal document that the Saskatchewan Party has received clearly highlights the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they're not putting the slogan on all government communications pieces. They're putting the slogan on good news pieces, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but they're saying, if it's bad news leave the slogan off.

Mr. Speaker, it says — and it gives an example, it gives an example — it says, if a letter's describing a fee increase or that a request has been denied, don't put the slogan on, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what it says. It says it . . . Isn't that interesting. It goes on good news, Mr. Speaker, but it's not going on bad news. That sends a different message to those getting bad news. The message is, our Future is Wide Open; yours not so much.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the question to the Premier is this: why wouldn't the slogan go on both the good news items of the government and the bad news items that the government sends out?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if it is as the member indicates it is, the fact of the matter is then the Wide Open Future branding and slogan and visual will be going on

much, much more of what's coming from this government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — If it's going on the good news, it's going on the majority. Mr. Deputy Speaker, why does this opposition oppose celebrating the province? Why does this opposition oppose talking about the future of Saskatchewan?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is exactly why, this is exactly why I am tempted — I am tempted — to go to the people for a mandate because what we've got . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — . . . is an opposition in total disarray, an opposition in total disarray. They don't know what they support. They don't support the forestry in the North apparently. I am told, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are 4 to 500 people gathered in Prince Albert right now — right now — saying they want us to build that forestry centre in downtown Prince Albert because they believe in the future of Saskatchewan.

It seems we've only got a small number of people left who don't believe in that future. They're all members of the Saskatchewan Party and they all sit in this legislature.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there's a reason that the Premier just now refused to answer the direct question, why do you put the slogan only on the good news and not on the bad news? The answer to the question of course is that if they only . . . If they put the slogan on both the good news and the bad news, Mr. Speaker, if they eliminated the bad news, the reason is because the minister responsible for SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) and the Crown Investments Corporation wouldn't get to send anything out at all, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're also putting the government slogan on toques and on visors, tattoos, and pens, and yes, even golf balls — at 75 bucks a dozen, by the way, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Now a few years ago the rules of the Assembly were changed so that MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) were no longer allowed to use taxpayer dollars to buy and distribute promotional items like golf balls. This was seen as an unfair advantage for the incumbent MLA. But that's exactly now what the government appears to be ready to do — using tax dollars to buy things that promote their message.

The question, the question, Mr. Speaker, to this: how does spending taxpayers' dollars on government golf balls help grow the province? And how is that fair in light of this recent change in the rules of this Assembly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm not sure if this branding signal is going on golf balls or not. We'll find that out.

We'll provide the information.

I do know one thing, Mr. Deputy Speaker. If any of those golf balls — if they are going to exist — if any of those golf balls should ever end up in the possession of the member from Swift Current, those golf balls are going to have wide distribution. You can be sure about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have undertaken in the fall of last year, a program — not a three-week program, not a three-month program — a three-year program to celebrate the future of Saskatchewan to tell the nation, to tell the world, to tell the people of Saskatchewan about the future of this great province. Mr. Deputy Speaker. To do that, to do that in these times in which we live, takes promotion. It takes willingness to step forward.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are in a very competitive world. Not just a competitive world in the private sector, but a competitive world among jurisdictions, each trying to tell their story. We are going to tell the good news. We're going to tell the story. We're not going to be deterred by the doom and gloomers that sit over there.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, just for the record the Premier's wondering if I'm interested in any NDP golf balls. The answer is no, I'm not interested in any NDP golf balls. I'm already a left-handed shot and I have a bit of a slice, Mr. Speaker, so in other words my drives are already going off to the left without using NDP golf balls, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm not interested.

Now we also know that the government is going to be printing T-shirts under this program. And the T-shirts say, Saskatchewan: hard to spell but easy to draw. I guess that's why the NDP didn't call us the Saskatchewan Party for the first three or four years; they couldn't spell Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, how much money, how much money in The Future is Wide Open campaign has been allocated to golf balls, toques, visors, and T-shirts?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I've assured the member opposite, the members opposite, we'll get this information. I don't have this information now. We'll get this information in full detail and provide it to the members.

But I will repeat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will not stop this Premier or this government or the people of Saskatchewan from telling the world about the great future that's here.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, here's what we're going to be telling the world. What we'll be telling the world is that in this province over the last 12 months we have generated 12,900 new jobs — 12,000 of them, Mr. Deputy Speaker, full-time jobs; 5,400 of them for young people in our province.

We're going to be talking about the change in the oil and gas industry in this province for the last year where we have seen, where we have seen expansion in the oil and gas exploration over 12 months of 72 per cent, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That's what we're going to be talking about.

And we'll be talking about the forestry, the innovative work that's going to be done in a forestry centre in downtown Prince Albert.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, wow. It's the Premier's contention then today that by putting The Future is Wide Open on some golf balls at 75 bucks a dozen, and by putting that slogan on some toques and some visors, that is the government's plan to promote Saskatchewan around the world, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is though, there is a very . . . some serious questioning in all of this. MLAs, by agreement of this Assembly, MLAs by agreement of this Assembly for some time have been restricted, have been restricted from using taxpayers' money to buy these kinds of promotional items for giveaways.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now the government through . . . this isn't a Crown, this is . . . its department-wide Future is Wide Open campaign will be doing exactly that. How does the Premier justify those two developments?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, many people, many in this province will recall that, yes indeed, it was this government that made changes to what was available to members of the legislature by way of promotional activity. And do you know why? Do you know why this government did that? In reaction to what went on when those people occupied the government benches. It took a fair bit of cleaning up, if I may so, after that group of men and women got a hold of the public treasury.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is a significant difference, there is a significant difference in promotion activity . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order. Order. Would members please come to order.

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, it appears I have touched a nerve over there. It appears I would have touched a nerve over there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me make this point. There is a considerable difference, if I may say, in promotional activity for one who is running in a partisan election, between promotional activity there and promotional activity that will celebrate and market our province to our people, to Canadians, and to the world.

And I repeat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will not stop this government from celebrating the future of this province and

telling that story across the nation and telling that story across Saskatchewan. We will not be stopped.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, what this is about, this is about a government 10 points behind in the polls, beset, beset by scandal after scandal after scandal. And so in their warped sense of what might work, what might be to their partisan advantage, they decide they're going to give out toques and golf balls to the people of the province, and say that's how they're promoting Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's absolutely ridiculous and it's why this government is heading for an electoral defeat, the likes of which we haven't seen in some time.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the Premier, to the Premier: why did this Assembly, and presumably he himself, vote in favour of making rule changes to the use of promotional items? Why would he vote in favour of that and just a few years later, as Premier, in his future wide open campaign, go against those very principles, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if the preamble to the member's question is indicative of his grasp of numbers, then I think every citizen in the province should question anything else he says.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, soon enough we will be going to the people and seeking a mandate for a new majority government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And I tell you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the meantime we are not going to cease doing what is correct by way of public policy.

It has been the decision of this government that we are going to, for the first time in this province's history, take our story and tell it to the nation. We're going to tell it to the nation. We are going to tell it to potential investors. We are going to tell it to immigrants, and we're going to tell it to Saskatchewan people because this is a government and this is a party that believes in something. We believe in the people of Saskatchewan. We believe in the future of Saskatchewan.

We do not believe only in seeking power for power's sake, which is what we see daily evidenced by the Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

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. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to have the opportunity today, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to respond to the second reading of The Land Surveys Amendment Act.

But I just want to quote something that the minister said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when he gave second reading. And I quote:

In the last two years ongoing consultations with stakeholders have led to some suggestions for improvements.

He goes on to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

The proposed amendments will: firstly, provide certainty with . . . definition of expression, legal description; secondly, provide flexibility in requiring a surveyor to conduct a field inspection . . .

And on it goes. But what he's talking about is reliability, and that is certainly not, when it comes to ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), Mr. Deputy Speaker, what is happening today.

We have checked with stakeholders, Mr. Speaker, and found that many stakeholders have no problem with this Bill. But when you get to the part where you're dealing with ISC, Mr. Speaker, we have a number of stakeholders that have a problem with what has happened with ISC. First over is the \$107 million that it's cost to put this new program in order, one that isn't working to this point and doesn't look like in the near future to have the problems ironed out.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we've talked to municipalities that have found that the costs have risen from municipalities all over the province as soon as they're dealing with land titles and land registrations.

Financial institutions, Mr. Speaker. Every financial institution in this province, whether it's training of their staff or dealing with the change in land titles for people that have bought or sold property, it's costing them more. There's extra paperwork. The time that it takes seems to be twice as long as it was before and there's no improvement to anywhere in this system for \$107 million, Mr. Speaker.

The idea was for ISC changes, to computerize it, was to be cheaper, faster, and more efficient, Mr. Speaker. And to this point, we haven't seen any part of this happen in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we also see the problem, and it's arose a number of times now, where a person with the same name is getting confused with someone else in the province because ISC cannot differentiate between the two people with the same

names.

And now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they're talking about changing the way land descriptions are described in this province, giving them a number instead of the normal land description, whether it's rural agricultural land where we have the old southwest of 10 whatever, or if we have block numbers from urban municipalities.

Now we're going to go to a number, where anyone with the same name, if there's twenty of them across the province, ISC cannot differentiate between any of these properties or property owners. And it's going to do nothing but create more confusion, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are checking with stakeholders. We have seen no problem to this point with Bill No. 17, The Land Surveys Amendment Act, but we are still checking with more stakeholders and at this point would like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 20

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Hagel that **Bill No. 20 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to join into the debate on Bill No. 20, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act.

This Act is coming about mainly because of the anticipation of rule changes that were proposed in the Third Report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures. That report, of course, has taken a couple of years to develop and to be put to this House. And one part of that has needed some changes and that's what this Bill speaks to.

The rules have not been passed as of yet but once they are passed, there needs to be an amount paid to . . . There needs to be some adjustment with the Board of Internal Economy. This Act defines committees under the new structure and provides for payment to the chairperson and deputy chair of the new committees, which will reflect a greatly increased workload by those members, Mr. Speaker.

But it should be noted, and it should be duly noted by members opposite on the government side and especially of Crown Corporations, these are rule changes that will be taking place into the future. These are not rule changes that have taken place now. There's absolutely no reason why committees such as Crown Corp Committee could not meet, or Public Accounts could not be meeting at this very time.

We've have a lot of annual reports been presented in the House. Unfortunately, a number of the ones, through SaskTel for example, when you look at their foreign investment, have seen a lot of red ink. And it's only fair that the Crown Corp Committee . . . Corporations Committee should be meeting under the old structure because this new structure has not been put into place.

This is talking about a structure that will be put into place into the future, and that's what this Bill speaks to. But it is very important that the government realize that, until that process is put into place and until we are operating under the new rule structure, the old rule structure is in place and there's absolutely no reason why committees cannot meet to discuss annual reports that have just recently been tabled over the last three or four weeks in this Chamber.

I guess perhaps there is a reason why the committee and the old structure would choose not to meet, and that would be if the annual reports of some of these Crown corporations were less than favourable.

And I think that's certainly what we've seen over the last couple of weeks as we've been raising issue after issue regarding investments by the Crown corporations that have lost money.

And I guess I can see why maybe there's a bit of a delaying game because of not wanting to discuss these annual reports. But, Mr. Speaker, the rule changes that have been presented under this third report of the Special Committee on Rules and Procedures is in place but not implemented.

And it will be into the future before it will be implemented, and there's a number of reasons for that. And I think the Rules Committee has met enough times to realize that until all the groundwork and the infrastructure work is done properly, that the rules . . . it would really be, I personally, I think counterproductive to put them into place until we have the foundation in place, Mr. Speaker.

Once that foundation is in place, this Act would then be applicable because it deals with remuneration to the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the various committees, Mr. Speaker.

We have certainly had enough time over the last two or three years, as rule changes have been discussed, to kind of get our minds around this and how this is all going to work. We don't have any hesitation at all with the amended Act as put forward. So, Mr. Speaker, if we do have any further questions, we'll handle that in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 21

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Melenchuk that **Bill No. 21 — The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I had to look around and see who is the member from Milestone. But a pleasure to stand in this Assembly to speak to Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker, I think the changes to this piece of legislation are certainly welcome, and it's probably appropriate and about time that these changes were implemented and brought forward. Mr. Speaker, what this piece of legislation is specifically doing is giving spouses of retired public employees the opportunity to

benefit and to actually have . . . become eligible for the benefits from that individual's pension plan.

Up until the provisions of this piece of legislation, if a member retired from the public service and had a pension plan and a member was married or had a spouse and that member passed away, that member's spouse would then have the ability to gain and actually be eligible for the benefits of that member's plan. However, if that member retired and unfortunately his spouse passed away and then the member remarried, the member's . . . the new spouse would not qualify for the benefits of that pension plan.

And I think what this piece of legislation is basically saying, indicating that it certainly would be unfair for a member who retired and lost a spouse and then remarried to find that pension plan that he had . . . he or she had been paying into over a number of years, would not qualify for those benefits, having . . . after they had paid into a pension plan through that period of time.

And so it certainly appears, Mr. Speaker, that the changes that are being implemented as a result of this piece of legislation are long overdue, certainly are appropriate, and it would be . . . it is certainly fair, it would seem, that those benefits would then pass on to that spouse of that member who had retired and unfortunately at a point in time where they would pass on, that their benefits would indeed pass on to their spouse.

I think, Mr. Speaker, the Bill itself is fairly straightforward and speaks to a number of issues that are before us. And it would appear to me, Mr. Speaker, that it's a piece of legislation that we certainly need to allow to move forward.

However, Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the fact that some of my other colleagues would like to express some of their opinions in regards to the Bill and to some issues that they have, questions that they would like to raise. And therefore at this time, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(14:30)

Bill No. 8

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish I could stand here today and say that it gives me great pleasure to enter the debate on this particular piece of legislation, but I am afraid that after having looked through the legislation and some of the notes associated with it and some of the material that has appeared in the newspaper and other publications concerning this particular piece of legislation, I don't think anybody could be real enthused about it.

Mr. Speaker, it is certainly an attempt at compromise and I think that would be one of the most positive things you could say about this piece of legislation.

As I mentioned, there's been considerable publication on this particular subject. I have in front of me here probably half a dozen to a dozen different articles that have appeared in publications around the country, some of which are local, some of which are national.

But I know that this particular piece of legislation grew out of the frustration of the Canadian public with the Young Offenders Act. And the Young Offenders Act, if I recall correctly, was supposed to be an improvement on a previous piece of legislation but it proved to be a dismal failure.

And frankly the people of the country, this province included, felt that the Young Offenders Act failed miserably on all counts. It failed the individuals who were charged with offences as a result of youthful indiscretions; it failed the people who were most significantly harmed by those indiscretions; it failed society on a larger basis; and in some instances it failed to produce any positive results for the most serious offenders. They were often let go with a slap on the wrist. That was the general consensus; that was the perception that came about as a result of the Young Offenders Act.

So what we had here was a piece of federal legislation that tried to address the inequities and the lack of consequences associated with the previous Young Offenders Act, but tried to remove from the tougher requirements and penalties for repeat offenders those young people who were first-time offenders or whose offences were less significant in terms of damage or reparations or consequences. So what we got was a situation where we tried to be all things to all people in this particular piece of legislation.

Now as I understand it, the federal government wasn't satisfied with trying to accomplish all these different things in one piece of legislation. They decided in their wisdom to make the implementation of this legislation the responsibility of the provinces and the territories. And as a consequence there are certain applications, certain additional requirements that might be made in this province that would differ from other provinces throughout the country. The implementation might be rather unique for each jurisdiction in the country.

And what we have before us, Bill No. 8, An Act respecting the Administration of Youth Justice Services and making consequential amendments to other Acts, Mr. Speaker, is the Saskatchewan version of the implementation of the federal legislation on this issue.

If I might just take a minute, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to refer to an editorial that appeared in the *Leader-Post* on the second of April of this year, where it says here that:

... (the) Youth Criminal Justice Act makes a decent attempt to address the perception that young offenders have often been treated too lightly.

And that's especially in view of the fact that, according to statistics, Canada has locked up almost twice as many young offenders under the previous Young Offenders Act than any other country including the United States.

And they go through to describe some of the changes in the

provincial legislation here, but at the end they say:

Generally, however, the new act strikes a fair balance between competing demands for tougher sentences and giving young offenders a second chance.

And I look at another piece of media on this particular legislation, headlined, "(The) Sask justice minister pleased with balance offered by (the) new law." But I'd like to refer to just a part of this particular article where they quote Corporal Rob Willis, a spokesman for the Regina Police Service, and he says:

For police, the new law will mean little change other than a closer look at alternative measures programs as an option instead of laying . . . criminal charge(s).

He says:

"We won't, probably, be laying as many charges on first-time offenders under the (new) . . . act . . . We're looking at alternatives to charging, and that's the scope of the new act.

So, Mr. Speaker, whether or not this particular piece of legislation meets the objectives of providing more rigorous . . . and scrutiny and oversight for offenders depending on the type of offence they've committed, it remains to be seen. It sounds like the police are not thinking there'll be a whole lot of change as a result of this legislation, just maybe some new alternate measures that might be available to them.

The *Leader-Post* thinks it strikes a good balance, this particular piece of legislation.

But I found an article written by the Canadian Press, or for the Canadian Press, in which some other concerns are expressed, and I'd like to quote this one line from a gentleman who is a specialist in youth crime. He's quoted in this article as saying:

It's not surprising many people don't have a good understanding of . . . (this Act). It's been a struggle even for professionals to figure out what it means.

And he goes on to say here that:

Ottawa can't solve all the problems. It's . . . up to the provinces, to (the) schools, to families. (And) we have to be realistic about what any legislation . . . (can actually do).

Presenting a bit of a contrary view, an opposing view, is the Justice critic for the official opposition in Ottawa, and he says:

What we are doing is breeding a disrespect for the law in ignoring the so-called minor offences, usually relating to property or break-and-enters.

This legislation will reduce the statistics of crime, but only because there will be fewer crimes reported and prosecuted. The criminal activity will continue.

So, Mr. Speaker, you can see from the comments I've presented to the House this afternoon that there is certainly a divergence of views on this particular piece of legislation.

There was plenty of hope that it would address the problems of the Young Offenders Act, but there are concerns that not only will it not address those problems that the Canadian public so clearly found disturbing, but it will maybe create even greater difficulties in the administration of justice.

One of the problems I think that the critic for the official opposition alluded to, and which is overlooked so frequently in these issues of justice, is the problems for young people and the societal circumstances they find themselves in. And it's usually related most specifically I believe, Mr. Speaker, to the quality of their relationships.

You know, young people require guidance; they require wisdom; they require encouragement; sometimes they require constraint. And it's the quality of their relationships that will help them develop properly as they grow up. And what has happened so often is we have seen family breakdowns; we have seen societal pressures; we have seen other kinds of pressures brought to bear on young people, quite often peer pressure which is quite likely the most serious issue a young person can address in their life.

And we've seen these pressures applied to young people in situations where they have not been able to cope adequately with the circumstances they're faced with. And they often make poor decisions. And unfortunately those poor decisions sometimes lead them into situations where they would rather not be and where the consequences can be very difficult and painful for the people that are either affected as victims or as individuals participating in a particular activity. And what I would like to see happen, Mr. Speaker, is that we would address some of these issues; that as a society, we would come to grips with the real problems that are facing our youth.

You know, I often hear that poverty is the reason for all ills in this world. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think that's simplistic. There's no doubt that poverty plays an incredibly important role in the lives of people, but it is not the single most determining factor. I believe that poverty is a result of so many of the other factors that come to play in the positive development of young people and that it's one of many, but there are others that are just as important, maybe more important than poverty, in whether or not a young person is going to develop a strong set of societal responsibilities and ethics that will allow them to function adequately in our society.

Mr. Speaker, if poverty was the number one contributor to poor social behaviour, we'd have seen the highest crime rates ever in Saskatchewan during the Depression, during the dirty thirties. Poverty by itself is not the determinant that people say it is. And I know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, that out of the Depression, out of the abject poverty of the people of this province in that era, we had many good things, many positive things develop. That poverty was what brought people together, to work together to benefit their communities, to participate in a meaningful way, whether or not there was a lot of money associated with their endeavours.

And I think that we can address the issues of poverty, but until we develop a very clear understanding of the importance of quality relationships for young people in particular, we will never ever address the problems of youth crime.

I'm saying this as a matter of my own experience, Mr. Speaker, but I think this particular view is held by a number of other people. And just as an example, I pulled this particular item out of the March 21 edition of *The StarPhoenix* in which it says, "Youth in justice system lack positive role models: (quoting an) expert." And I won't read the whole article but I would like to just mention a few, a few points of view that were expressed by this individual:

Long-term relationships are key to preventing youth crime and to rehabilitating youngsters who have already broken the law, the aboriginal justice reform commission heard this week.

Troubled youth need stable, long-term relationships with adults, including teachers, social workers, foster parents, lawyers, probation officers and other professionals in their lives . . .

This is a claim made by Richard Rothenburger, the co-ordinator for the Saskatchewan Youth in Care and Custody Network.

I could go on to a . . . at great length to quote from here but he says:

Stable relationships with those adult workers give youth positive role models, supportive listeners and guiding hands . . .

Youth in justice and child welfare systems are often denied the opportunity to develop strong long-term relationships, as they are moved from one facility to another and from one foster home to another. Even those youth fortunate enough to stay in one place can be affected by a high turnover of professionals in their lives . . .

This challenge robs young people — many of whom are already vulnerable — of the relationships that can help them to cope, to surpass and to succeed, the report states.

Mr. Speaker, this particular piece of legislation, while it might in fact help individuals who are first-time offenders, might not provide jail as an instant and immediate consequence of their behaviour, I suspect will be relatively positive. And I hope that it will have the impact that obviously the federal government and the provincial government thinks it will.

But on the other hand, I hope that it is not sending the wrong signal. I hope it is not saying to young people who are first-time offenders, this situation is not serious and we aren't going to treat it seriously so we're going to minimize the consequences of your behaviour. Frankly, Mr. Speaker, that would be a serious mistake on behalf of the society as a whole, but more importantly, it would be a serious mistake on the part of the long-term consequences for that individual.

I think these situations are very delicate, and need to be treated with the utmost of discernment and careful consideration by the individuals who are working with the individuals who are charged with youth crime.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to wrap up some of my comments on this particular piece of legislation by reviewing what it is this

Bill purports to do.

Like I said earlier, it's a broad-ranging Bill that takes into consideration a number of definitions and tries to outline some of the activities of the provincial legislation as it will relate to the federal legislation.

Actually what it does simply is tries to define custody facility and also talks about how the federal legislation will be applied in the province of Saskatchewan. It deals with powers allocated to various individuals responsible for implementing the provincial and federal legislation.

(14:45)

And of course it has the usual regulations section that this government is so fond of including in every piece of legislation they bring forward. Frankly, the legislation . . . the regulations section is often more detailed and specific than the legislation itself. But we haven't seen those regulations as yet, Mr. Speaker. And we'll be interested in seeing what is entailed with the regulatory part of this particular piece of legislation.

And a transitional section, that is included here, essentially provides for the period of time that will elapse before the new provincial legislation is proclaimed.

So while it appears here that Ottawa is giving the provinces some latitude in adapting the new federal legislation, it's also clearly leaving it up to each province to try and figure out how it's going to implement the various programs and services that will be required while working without adequate funding or resources at this point. That's one other problem with this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

While we see what is being attempted here, we don't know how it's ever going to be put into working mode because no indication, that I know of, has been given to how these programs will be funded and carried forward into the future.

As I indicated at the outset, there is much about this Bill that deserves discussion. And I think over the last number of weeks many members of the official opposition have spoken to this particular piece of legislation, and I think that it is the intention of several others to speak on behalf of their constituents.

Just as a final, as a final comment, Mr. Speaker. The reason I participated in this debate today was a call to my office by one of my constituents. And I do want to get this on the record because I think this expresses sort of the frustration of individuals in an anecdotal way but it's a very real indication of how youth crime affects everybody.

This individual has a daughter who moved to the city here and took up a job and had her own vehicle. And in the short time that she was here, she had her car broken into on two separate occasions.

Now because of those two instances . . . No one was ever found, no one ever was made or held responsible for the crime, none of the possessions were ever located and returned to the individual, but the person whose car was broken into had to pay an increased insurance deductible. Their insurance costs went

up. This was a single, young lady working in the city, who through no fault of her own had her car broken into and possessions stolen twice. And on each instance when insurance claims were placed with the insurer, her insurance rates went up.

Now if that wasn't bad enough, the young lady went home over the holidays and because she didn't have an appropriate vehicle to return to the city, her father gave her a vehicle as a substitute in the meantime. And shortly after the young lady arrived in the city and using her father's vehicle while she was making arrangements for her own vehicle, her dad's vehicle was stolen. And I don't know if they ever recovered it or not. I never got to that point. The constituent, when he phoned me to complain about this situation, was just exasperated enough to give me the bare facts and not all of the extenuating circumstances or details.

But nevertheless what he tells me now is that instead of having a \$200 deductible they had to go to a \$50 deductible in order to try and protect themselves to some extent. And now they are paying up to . . . I'm sorry, they used to have a \$500 deductible when they lived in rural Saskatchewan, but now they are paying insurance premiums based on a \$50 deductible and they've had two break-ins and a vehicle stolen, and absolutely no indication that anybody will be held responsible for that crime.

And, Mr. Speaker, when you have those kind of anecdotal situations, you say, well that's an exception, that's an unusual situation. But you know, if you have, Mr. Speaker, one anecdotal situation after the other, pretty soon you have a trend and then you have a public response and then you have a public outcry. I certainly hope this legislation will go to some distance to help address the issues, but I'm not so certain they will, having looked at some of the implications of this legislation.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this point I would like to move we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 26 — The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise and move second reading of Bill No. 26, to amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, the 2000 budget announced this government's plan to reform Saskatchewan's personal tax system. Our objective was to achieve a simple, fair, and competitive tax system that would be more responsive to the needs of Saskatchewan people and also strengthen the Saskatchewan economy.

To meet this objective our government introduced a multi-year tax reform initiative as part of our long-term vision for growth and opportunity in Saskatchewan. On January 1, 2001 the determination of Saskatchewan personal income tax was simplified. The flat tax, the debt reduction surtax, the high income surtax, and the Saskatchewan tax reduction were all eliminated. These have now been replaced with a simple

three-rate tax structure and provincial tax credits which generally parallel the federal tax credits.

The new provincial income tax system has also introduced a universal dependent child tax credit and a universal supplement to the age tax credit, Mr. Speaker.

The tax reform plan included tax rate reductions in each of the years 2002 and 2003 taxation years through reductions to income tax rates and increases to the senior supplement and dependent child tax credits. The 2003 changes have now been implemented, Mr. Speaker, and Saskatchewan's new personal income tax structure is fully implemented.

The 2003 changes included a significant expansion in the income tax brackets, in addition to the reduction in the tax rates and the increases to the child and senior tax credits. Mr. Speaker, all income tax payers have benefited from tax reform.

Mr. Speaker, our multi-year personal tax reform initiative delivered meaningful tax relief to Saskatchewan residents. The introduction of higher personal tax credit amounts removed thousands of lower income earners from the income tax rolls. Income tax reform has put over \$400 million per year into the hands of Saskatchewan people. An average Saskatchewan family is paying \$1,030 less in provincial income tax today than they did in 1999 and a full third less than they did in 1993, a total savings of almost \$1,500 each and every year, Mr. Speaker.

Now this government has also introduced a number of initiatives to improve the competitiveness of Saskatchewan's business tax regime. We have reduced the small-business income tax rate from 10 per cent in 1991 to 6 per cent today. We have increased the annual amount of income eligible for this rate from \$200,000 to \$300,000.

We have significantly reduced corporate capital taxes for Saskatchewan-based businesses. We have also introduced a number of tax incentives targeted to specific segments of the provincial economy, including manufacturing and processing, the film industry, and the resource sector. And, Mr. Speaker, we will continue to do more for families and businesses as our fiscal resources permit.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill introduces amendments that will implement the small-business tax reduction announced in the 2003 budget, as well as provide several technical clarifications and corrections to references to the federal Income Tax Act.

As I've already described, the small-business corporate income tax rate has been reduced from 10 per cent in 1991 to 6 per cent in 2003. This Bill implements a further reduction to five per cent by 2005.

Mr. Speaker, this initiative builds on the government's previous measures to improve tax competitiveness and encourage Saskatchewan-based small businesses. Since 1991, the small-business tax rate has been cut in half.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that a personal tax reform and our business tax initiatives are part of a long-term vision for growth and opportunity in the province of Saskatchewan. A

competitive tax regime is a central part of our plan to create the economic growth needed to secure our Saskatchewan quality of life.

We believe we are doing what is right, what is fair, and what makes sense for our province and our people — building a stronger, more prosperous Saskatchewan for all of us to enjoy.

Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to answer questions concerning the amendments to The Income Tax Act, 2000 when discussing this Bill at Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of the Act to amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand and speak to this piece of legislation, The Income Tax Amendment Act, 2003. Mr. Speaker, the minister is right when he talks about reducing income tax and what the government has done over the past few years.

Certainly, Mr. Speaker, I think if you look very carefully, we look back to prior to the 1999 election and the call from the Saskatchewan Party at that time for a reduction of the personal income tax, and the Finance minister of the day basically is saying that this opposition was being irresponsible in suggesting that reducing your personal tax should be a priority or it should be a measure that any government or the current government of Saskatchewan should even take a look at.

But what we have seen, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the 1999 election when the NDP just were elected by the skin of their teeth — in fact, received fewer votes than Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition — the minister of Finance and the premier at the time had an about-turn. And while I think even . . . I think I'll have to admit that even during the election campaign, the government of the day recognized where the electorate was on the whole income tax issue and decided they'd better come out with an income tax statement as well.

And then since the 1999 election, as the minister indicated, the government has moved in the direction of reducing personal income tax. And, Mr. Speaker, we have given the government and the Finance ministers in charge credit for the fact that they have listened very carefully to the cries of the Saskatchewan taxpayer and have begun to reduce the personal income tax.

Now I think one of the arguments we heard from the former premier, we heard from the former Finance minister, that they could not afford to reduce personal income taxes because it would cost the government, and they had to provide funding for health care, they had to provide funding for education, and they had to provide funding for highways, Mr. Speaker.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the current budget statement, we look at what's happened over the past three years, if I'm not mistaken, the reduction in the personal income tax in fact has not reduced the revenues the government has been taking in through taxes.

If I'm not mistaken, Mr. Speaker, we've actually seen an

increase which I think is an indication that when a working person has more money in their pocket, that individual or those individuals or homeowners or family units are more than prepared to invest more in their own personal lives and in their community and in their province than if the government endeavoured to increase their revenues by increasing taxes, Mr. Speaker.

So the announcement in this 2003 budget of reducing the small business tax, here again, Mr. Speaker, is just another idea that the Saskatchewan Party certainly went to the polls with in 1999. And we agree with the fact that it's time. Maybe it's been a long time coming; it's taken the government some time to realize.

When they've got a promotion right now talking about a wide-open Saskatchewan . . . The facts are, Mr. Speaker, I think the government's getting the same message that the Saskatchewan Party and their Grow Saskatchewan plan have been catching the attention of the electorate of the province of Saskatchewan and so the government have come out with their own catchy phrase of a wide-open province, a province to invest in.

However, Mr. Speaker, when they were talking about a province that was wide open to business, they realized, began to realize that in some ways there were a number of impediments that were in — and obstacles — that were in place that were hindering and certainly would continue to hinder investment in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, we talk about corporate taxes. We talk about small-business taxes and as we look across the province of Saskatchewan, the businesses that employ the majority of people across the province of Saskatchewan are small businesses.

And, Mr. Speaker, that won't change a lot. We'll have some large corporations hopefully coming to the province, investing in the province and generating job opportunities and good quality job opportunities. But the realities are the larger portion will continue to be the small-business sector that will grow this province and help grow this province.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, when we look at small communities across our province and the provincial government's initiative in trying to, trying to grow rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, it will not grow on the backs of large, the large corporate sector.

Mr. Speaker, it will grow on the basis of the small family business community that we continue to see thrive in the province of Saskatchewan — whether it be a farming operation, a family farming operation, or a small agricultural implement dealers operation, or whatever the business, Mr. Speaker. That small business is the catalyst that will help build our economy.

And so, Mr. Speaker, it's appropriate that the government have recognized that and are taking steps to give some recognition to the small-business community by addressing the issue of the tax on small business.

And while the reduction, there is a reduction coming, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, our caucus continues to believe we need a further reduction on the small-business tax if we're going to encourage investment in our province and in our communities, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to encourage growth, if we're going to encourage job opportunities in the province of Saskatchewan.

Because, Mr. Speaker, as we look across our province and there isn't a small community today that isn't facing some major challenges and some of the challenges that we're facing in our small communities is the loss of families and young people as they look further afield for job opportunities because they aren't there. And in many cases unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing is people are not just looking to the larger communities within the province; they're looking outside of the province. They're looking beyond the province of Saskatchewan.

And in many cases the majority happen to be going to the province to the west, the province of Alberta. And a lot of it has to do, Mr. Speaker, as a result they're looking west because of the tax, tax that they would be paying — whether it would be a business, whether it be personal income tax — and the fact that they will have more dollars left in their pockets at the end of the day.

And so I think what this government is beginning to realize is the fact that the more money you leave in people's pockets — as they've seen through their own revenue that's been generated from taxes — the more money you leave in people's pockets, the more money will be generated through employment opportunities and expenditures which will result in higher revenues for the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd have to say my colleagues, while we've got a lot of questions as to the direction the government is going, and we've got a lot of questions as to why it's taken the government a long time to begin to recognize the importance of addressing these issues, however, Mr. Speaker, we realize and recognize the reluctance they've had because their views have always been: but if you are able to make some money, then it's for us to tax so we can help look after people who are the lower-income or the less fortunate, providing their health care or their education or whatever need there be out there.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation. I think, Mr. Speaker, it will take more discussion and more debate before we get into line-by-line discussion in committee. And therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 31 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation
Amendment Act, 2003/Loi de 2003 modifiant la Loi de 1997
sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de
hasard**

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce the amendments contained in Bill No. 31, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2003.

The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act in 1997, Mr. Speaker,

provides the statutory basis upon which the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority, or SLGA, regulates gaming and the distribution and consumption of alcohol in the province.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will provide the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission with the legislative authority to hear appeals of licensing and regulatory decisions made by First Nations gaming licensing authorities, GLA, respecting on-reserve charitable gaming.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill is as a result of the renewed 25-year Gaming Framework Agreement signed last year between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. This agreement, Mr. Speaker, is significant for both the people of Saskatchewan and our First Nations partners.

The FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations), through the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, has already created significant jobs and economic spinoffs throughout the province. The renewed agreement ensures these continued opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, the Gaming Framework Agreement also establishes a number of important provisions to enhance First Nations participation in Saskatchewan's gaming industry. An important part of the agreement is the inclusion of First Nations in the regulation and licensing of on-reserve charitable gaming. As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, the regulation of on-reserve First Nation charitable gaming in the province is the responsibility of SLGA, the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority. The renewed Gaming Framework Agreement provides for a process leading to the eventual delegation of licensing and regulatory authority for on-reserve charitable gaming to the First Nations gaming licensing authorities, or GLA, the gaming licensing authorities.

The eventual regulation of First Nation on-reserve charitable gaming by First Nations will be a positive development for our province. For its part, the FSIN has established Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Licensing Inc. The goal of this body, Mr. Speaker, is to eventually fulfill the primary charitable gaming licensing function within First Nations communities.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that SLGA and the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Licensing continue to work together to build SIGL's capacity to eventually assume the role of First Nation GLA in the province, the gaming licensing authority.

So, Mr. Speaker, you will also know that all regulatory and licensing decisions made by Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority are subject to appeal to the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Licensing Commission. The commission's primary role is to serve as an independent, fair, quasi-judicial body mandated to ensure proper application of the legislation and the regulations.

So then, Mr. Speaker, the intent of this Bill is to provide the commission with the authority to eventually hear appeals of licensing and regulatory decisions made by First Nation GLAs, such as the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Licensing respecting on-reserve charitable gaming.

These amendments will ensure that First Nation GLAs are accountable to the commission just as the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority is. For its part, Mr. Speaker, the government committed to First Nations that it would expeditiously bring to this Assembly the amendments to the Act that facilitates First Nations regulation of on-reserve charitable gaming.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move that Bill No. 31, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2003, be now read a second time.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to speak to Bill No. 31 this afternoon, An Act to amend The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Act, 1997.

Mr. Speaker, one very important piece of information or thought that comes from my constituents and people of Saskatchewan concerning gambling and liquor and gaming and its relationship to the people of Saskatchewan, in particular the First Nations of this province, is accountability. As we've seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, there's been a real problem in that area — money being misspent by those involved. And we are very concerned, as the people of Saskatchewan are very concerned, that money earned from gambling, liquor, and gaming gets to the people that it is most needed and that's to the everyday First Nations people on- and off-reserve.

And, Mr. Speaker, as is noted, the government has signed a 25-year framework with FSIN. And it's very important that within this framework and within the rules and regulations and the amendments that are coming forward, that the accountability side to the First Nations people is looked after, and these people's voices are heard, and their wishes and concerns and needs and wants are looked after because it's very important that this money is not wasted, so it's used for the purpose that it was intended, for the First Nations people of this province.

Other aspects of gambling of course, as we know, is addiction to gambling. And it's not only the personal addiction of individuals but also the gambling addiction of governments. And we have seen that this government has relied on revenues from gambling in a big way to finance parts of government expenditures. And, Mr. Speaker, that always is a concern that this addiction, both at the personal level and at the provincial level, is becoming a greater and greater problem.

As we've noted in the past, that the government has been asked and was expected to put money towards treatment for addictive gamblers and to date the government has not lived up to that commitment in any sense. And so this is also a concern when there's new agreements, new amendments coming forward, that these commitments by the government have not been met. And it's a concern — the people of Saskatchewan are very concerned about what the intent of the government . . . The government continues to take its full share, put it towards general revenue. And of course, as we know, the government isn't the greatest body to spend its money properly as well.

And as we see, the losses in — well up to \$85 million losses now in Crown losses — in outside-of-the-province investments. One wonders that possibly some of these losses should not have been . . . Well no losses should have been contemplated and these investments should have been kept in the province and some of this money put towards gambling addicts and to try to help the everyday person in this province to help with and cope with their problems.

As we have seen, Mr. Speaker, as the people of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Party has stated many times, the Saskatchewan Party policy is to grow this province by 10,000 people over the next 10 years for a total of 100,000 people.

And the First Nations of this province is a vital part of that plan of the Saskatchewan Party. And we believe that the groundwork needs to be done properly at this stage of development for the First Nations concerning this Bill. And in future agreements and in future endeavours, that the First Nations of this province be an important part of the growth and development of this province. And liquor and gaming and casinos is a source of employment to First Nations and we must ensure that that continues for the benefit of everyday First Nations people and for the benefit of the province as a whole.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to . . . we will . . . the critic for the Saskatchewan Party will certainly do a lot of work on this. We will send this Bill out and ask the stakeholders what they think of it — the First Nations people. Also get a legal opinion on all the different amendments. And we will certainly have many questions later on and there'll be many more speeches made by Sask Party members concerning these amendments.

So at this time I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 36 — The Agricultural Safety Net
Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At the end of my remarks I will move second reading of the amendments to The Agricultural Safety Net Act. The amendments to the Act are needed so that Saskatchewan can meet the national parameters of the revised safety net stabilization account program, NISA (Net Income Stabilization Account) under the agricultural policy framework, APF.

(15:15)

We believe that the APF is good for Saskatchewan for several reasons. Business risk management is one of the five founding pillars of the new APF. Federal funding under the policy will be used to finance two main national programs — the revised NISA program to both stabilization and disaster protection and a crop insurance program to provide protection against producer losses. Both of these programs have national parameters.

The federal government has indicated that their goal is to treat farmers across the country in similar circumstances in the same manner. Obviously, we support that goal. Allocation of federal funding will be on a demand-driven basis. That means that the pool of federal money to producers will be based on

participation and national programs and not based on the relative size of the agricultural industry in each province. This change should result in Saskatchewan receiving about 10 million to 12 million more than our current allocation in our first year.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan could receive even more federal funding as a demand-driven policy is fully implemented. The federal government has allocated significant funding for the crop insurance program that will allow for enhancements to the program in Saskatchewan. Some of these enhancements were announced this year, such as the updated yield coverage and improved forage coverage levels and there . . . also the opportunity to make more improvements into the future years.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, the amendments to the agricultural safety net will allow Saskatchewan to participate at the national risk business program under the APF. The new programs have the . . . The new programs have key changes over the former programs and they include these: they will provide both stabilization and disaster coverage within one integrated program; provide deeper coverage during the downturns in farm income; and provide similar levels of coverage regardless of farm size.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I wish to emphasize that we need to make the changes to the APF to meet the guidelines of the revised national program. We believe we have taken the first step into the future of the new agricultural policy framework. The APF and its coordination and collaborative approach will have a positive impact on the agricultural sector, on rural Saskatchewan, and on the provincial economy for years to come.

Therefore I move the amendments to the agricultural safety net to be read a second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again it's a pleasure to stand in the Assembly and speak to a piece of legislation that has been brought forward by the, in this case, by the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, we're aware of the fact that agriculture plays a vital role in the economic activity and the economy of this province. It has, while it's . . . Over the past number of years it's taken on a reduced role as we see other sectors of the economy start to rev up and become important players in our economy. It still, nonetheless, is a major contributor to the economy of this province, not only in dollars and cents but also in manpower hours.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that since 1992 and the elimination of the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) program, the agricultural community of this province has certainly been looking for some leadership and for some direction in arriving at a federally and provincially funded farm stabilization program. And I might also add, producers will be involved and they have been over the years.

I think one of the misconceptions we have when it comes to agriculture in the province of Saskatchewan is that, here the

government goes again. It's bailing out producers as a result of circumstances that were the producers' control, like it didn't rain. Well that's the producers' fault. Or there's too much rain. Or it froze too early. Whatever the circumstances are, Mr. Speaker.

And I think it's important for the taxpayers of the province to recognize the fact that the agriculture community through the years has been very involved in any of the safety nets through premiums. And while the premiums, there's a balance between federal and provincial funding and agriculture . . . and the producers, it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we arrive at a safety net that will be fair to all.

I think I can say, Mr. Speaker, certainly in my area we've seen the NISA program that was implemented a number of years ago, and it took the place of the western . . . another program of its nature where you had a check that, not really a check off, but you could, as you deliver a product to market, you could put money into this . . . into a stabilization account somewhat similar to NISA. And then when that was done away with, the NISA program came into place. And NISA, by and large, Mr. Speaker, has been an asset to a number of producers.

Now the federal minister has argued over the past number of years that, well the problem with NISA is there's too much money sitting in the account. The unfortunate part, Mr. Speaker — and I'm not sure whether the minister has pointed this out; I would be surprised if the minister hasn't taken the time to point out to the federal minister — while there may be money in the NISA accounts, if you take a look at who holds those accounts, most of the money in those NISA accounts where the accounts haven't really been drawn on are basically farmers close to and into retirement who were able in some of their last few years, and had excellent years, were able to contribute to NISA, however have, due to circumstances they didn't have a lot of control over, really didn't qualify for NISA.

But for the producers that were in situations as a result of crop loss or income loss, certainly — and a lot of the new producers — those producers through the years have taken advantage of the NISA program and have used the NISA program for what it was meant to be and what it was intended for.

And we have some major concerns with regards to changing the NISA program. Now if the minister is telling us that at the end of the day this is going to be a much better program, a fairer program, fine. We want to see exactly what this no agriculture policy framework is going to be, what the new safety net program is going to have for the agriculture producers of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, as I indicated, agriculture does play an important role.

And we're looking to bring younger people into the agricultural field. And we look at the age of the farm community in the province of Saskatchewan, and unfortunately over the past number of years the average age of a farmer in Saskatchewan has risen dramatically. I believe it's well into 40s or low 50s, the age of the agriculture producer in Saskatchewan.

And if we're going to, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to see our rural communities revitalized, if we're going to see our agricultural community revitalized, Mr. Speaker, we need

avenues whereby young people can look at agriculture as a place to invest.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen and are seeing today areas where younger families are looking at agriculture as a real opportunity, but not in the numbers that we've seen in the past and which is unfortunate.

And so I think a lot of producers and a lot of young families, a lot of young men and women will certainly be looking at what we have coming down the pipe in the way of safety nets that they can be . . . participate in that will carry them through that difficult year.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the current program, we look at the CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) program, we look at the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program, and while I've talked to some producers who have said they've done very well as a result of those two programs, the majority of producers I've talked to haven't even qualified.

And one has to ask the question . . . And here again, Mr. Speaker, I think certainly our Department of Agriculture, the minister responsible, as the minister and his department officials are talking to federal officials and talking to other agricultural ministers across the province, as they're looking at developing the farm safety net, I think what's important, Mr. Speaker, is that we develop a safety net that cannot be farmed.

And one of the biggest problems with CFIP, one of the biggest problems with AIDA, Mr. Speaker, if you learned how to farm the program, you did very well at it. And it many . . . But the producer who really endeavoured to make his or her farm go and survive on its own didn't qualify for either CFIP or AIDA. And I think that's important, Mr. Speaker, and that's something that we'll certainly want to quiz the minister on.

If indeed this is going to be a truly fair and equal stabilization program for all producers — and as the minister I believe indicated, they're looking at not only enhancing it but making it a program that will respond to the economic need rather than the ability of a producer to farm a program — then I think we're probably going in the right direction. I think we will certainly all agree with that. And it's imperative that we really work to establish a firm national stabilization program.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister is right when he talks about a federal agricultural program that would be fair to Saskatchewan producers as well. Because we look at Canada, we look at the vastness of our country, we look at the types of agriculture that we have, and we look from the East Coast right through to the West Coast and there's a vast difference in the way agriculture and farmers function across this country.

From the . . . whether you call them from the fishery or from the Atlantic region, they have the fishery, they have vegetables, they . . . and they have fruits; and Ontario, you've got small market gardens as well; and the Prairies is noted for its wheat production, its large acreage farming operations. Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt it takes time and it'll be a while to come up with a fair and national safety net program.

But I think, Mr. Speaker, it's fair to say that in many ways this

government has been dragging its feet in being at the table. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the current minister had no control over it but we all know back in the mid-'80s where one of the . . . an Agriculture minister was not at the table when he should have been, and as a result, Saskatchewan producers are paying for his lack of being at the table to argue on behalf of Saskatchewan producers.

Mr. Speaker, as well, the minister talked about increased protection under the crop insurance program. And I think as agriculture producers were going through their crop insurance information this year, the increased protection is certainly something that was welcome, was looked forward to.

However, Mr. Speaker, one of the big concerns regarding crop insurance was the substantial increase in the crop insurance premiums. And I think in the long run we're better off to, Mr. Speaker, we're better off to design a program and have a premium that is fair and reasonable and maintain that premium to the point where, if an insurance program reaches a certain level of protection and there's a fund available, you may reduce the premium somewhat. But you want to maintain that fund so that the crop insurance program doesn't find itself, as it is this year, really behind the eight ball because of the draw as a result of drought across the vast region of the province.

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of questions that need to be raised in regards to this piece of legislation. We need to certainly question the minister and the department regarding how the stabilization program will work, what it's going to cost producers, what it will cost the province to be part of the stabilization program, whether or not the program will really address the disastrous needs that arise every once in awhile, and whether it will indeed provide the coverage that producers over the years have found they've needed during downturns.

And, Mr. Speaker, regardless of your farm size you will have the same equal level of support. And I think that's important, Mr. Speaker. I think over the past few years many producers have looked on the fact that if they added acreage, they would have better coverage under the safety net programs that currently are available. And I don't think, Mr. Speaker, that's a message we necessarily want to send.

We're not saying that you shouldn't be able to expand, but if a person chooses to be a smaller . . . farm on a smaller scale, they should have the same level, equal level, of protection regardless of their farm size.

So, Mr. Speaker, having listened to the minister and having listened to the debate that's been taking place and we've listened to agricultural groups and everyone has a different sense of where the province should be going, what direction we should be taking when it comes to farm safety nets, I think, Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is something that we want to look to in more depth, in greater depth before we get to Committee of the Whole and debating it. And therefore at this time I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(15:30)

Bill No. 37 — The Crop Insurance Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of amendments to The Crop Insurance Act.

On March 11, 2003 the province of Saskatchewan signed an agreement with the Government of Canada to participate in the agricultural program under the agricultural policy framework. Saskatchewan is committed to moving the agricultural sector forward on the five key pillars of the APF. Saskatchewan crop insurance falls under the APF's business risk management chapter.

The federal and provincial government are in the process of restructuring business risk management programs. There is a need to ensure crop insurance . . . that The Crop Insurance Act provides for the type of crop insurance programs being developed under the APF, as well as ensuring it provides a scope of future enhancements.

The amendments proposed will provide for the use of new technology such as satellite imagery technology that can be used to measure yields. Other proposed amendments to The Crop Insurance Act include these: authority for the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation to levy administrative fees. We do not intend to implement administrative fees at this time but because provinces use the option within the 60/40 government/producer cost-share formula . . . In other words, producers pay an administrative fee which offsets their share premiums. If at some point in the future Saskatchewan farmers recommend this option, we want our legislation to be able to enable that to happen.

Another amendment would allow the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation to enter into contracts with other organizations to administer the program in areas related to crop insurance.

Mr. Speaker, producer groups and the Farm Support Review Committee have been consulted with respect to the future direction of crop insurance and business risk management programs under the APF. On their direction we made improvements to crop insurance for 2003. We have committed to working with the industry to make future improvements and we are working together with their neighbours, Manitoba and Alberta, to look at innovations to provide better products to farmers.

Mr. Speaker, these changes will ensure that The Crop Insurance Act provide the basis for crop insurance program we need in the 21st century.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I move amendment to The Crop . . . I move that amendments to The Crop Insurance Act be read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm . . . pleasure to speak to Bill No. 37, An Act to amend The Crop Insurance Act.

The crop insurance of course is a very valuable tool to the producers of this province. In the past, and as we know in the last couple of years and particular last year, that there was an

increase in the enrolment in crop insurance because of the severe drought situation, and it has some failings but the crop insurance has certainly been a support to producers in many years. Of course always, premiums concerning crop insurance are always an issue.

The minister speaks about the APF and, as is noted, the government has committed to the APF. There's been a lot of discussion and concern about going to the next stage and whether the province should sign on to the next stage of implementation with the APF immediately, as the federal government and other governments want and have done.

I believe the producers of this province and certainly the Saskatchewan Party has been saying that there should be a year's delay in joining up for the implementation phase because of so many uncertainties and questions that remain in the APF.

The minister of course speaks to some amendments concerning the use of new technologies, satellite imagery technology that can be used to measure fields. This is an important feature nowadays in crop insurance and in measuring fields and for claim positions.

Mr. Speaker, other areas. The minister talked about allowing crop insurance to enter into contracts with other organizations to administer programs in areas related to crop insurance. I guess there's a question there. Is the minister referring to co-insurance and offsetting some of the risk and liability to the province and to the plan by getting co-insurance from other insurance companies? And questions around who that could be — would that include private insurance companies or would it include other jurisdictions? So there's many questions concerning that.

I think it's important that Saskatchewan work with its two neighbours, Manitoba and Alberta. Working within the crop insurance could be many benefits from exchanging information and possibly working together towards a larger plan in the crop insurance if that's feasible in the future.

Of course there's an area which allows fees to be charged to producers, and as I mentioned earlier, the cost of the crop insurance is always a factor. And as we see, the government raised the crop insurance premiums this year by 52 per cent on the average. And that's only on the average. I've seen some individual crops be raised 70, 80 per cent. So that's quite a hike.

There's no guarantee that we're going to have a good crop to offset these large expenditures in crop insurance, and that's always a concern to the producer. And that's one of the reason a number of producers have backed away from crop insurance in the past because of the . . . because of the cost of the program to their individual businesses and farms.

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe, when we talk about the APF and crop insurance and changes, I believe the stakeholders in this province have said they should wait one year before implementing the next stage. And as we see, the government is just in the process of bringing in amendments and some changes to crop insurance and the previous Bill.

So I think that might be a wise decision to make on the

government to sit back and get this, get it right because it's very important for the future of Saskatchewan agriculture and the grain producers of this province to get this Act and this APF plan in place and get it done right.

Our critic for Agriculture, the member from Watrous will be asking the stakeholders and discussing this Act in more depth, and we certainly will ask many questions in Committee of the Whole. So at this time I would like to adjourn debate . . . move to adjourn debate, Mr. Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 38 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the end of my remarks I will move second reading of amendments to The Farm Financial Stability Act. The amendments make these sets of changes.

First, an existing section of the Act is being changed to allow feedlots to participate under the enhanced feeder option. The enhanced feeder option allows a feedlot along with a group of individual members to form an association.

This association gives both the feedlot member and the individual member the ability to borrow money and purchase feeder cattle. The association members will typically be able to finance their purchases at preferential rates at the strength of the 25 per cent government guarantee provided to the participating lender. The key benefits of this new option is the availability of feedlot members to increase its borrowing limit.

The second amendment to existing sections will facilitate administration of the program by allowing the association to brand program cattle, enhanced warrant provisions by clarifying that any provincial supervisor is included in an application for a warrant and allowing more than one provincial supervisor to be included on the warrant, and it also provides access to records of any operator that has been approved as a custom operator of the program to be available for inspection. And finally, it clarifies exemptions to The Personal Property Security Act.

Thirdly, a new section is being added to provide for the development of new individual feeder option. This program option will allow individual feedlot loan guarantees for the purchaser of feeder cattle without the requirement to form an association.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments are the direct result of a series of consultations with key stakeholders who worked with the government to improve the strength of The Farm Financial Stability Act. These stakeholders provided their expertise and thoughtful advice. They spoke, we listened, and today we act with the introduction of the amendments.

Mr. Speaker, consultations were conducted with representatives from a variety of the agricultural lenders. Producers' Advisory Committee to the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program were consulted with, the Saskatchewan Cattle Feeders Association, and the feedlot working group that we've been working with.

We will continue our collaborations and consultations with these groups to develop regulatory regulations that will support the amendments. These regulations are the details . . . in detail are the nuts and bolts of how the amendments will be implemented in the real-life situations.

Mr. Speaker, members of this Assembly will have an opportunity to debate and review the line-by-line amendments during committee. My purpose today is to provide an overview of the amendments to part IV of the new section and part IV.1 or — sorry — VI.1.

The amendments of part VI.1 are administrative. They are identified to clarify authority of the officials from my department by carrying out their duties in administering the livestock loan guarantee program under the Act.

In addition the changes conform, by exemption from The Personal Property Security Act, 1993, do in fact apply to the transition in place from the time exemptions become effective.

Access will be provided through records of feedlots and participating in the program to confirm management of financial liability. And the last key change in this section will allow a producer association to brand cattle and to apply offsets between options in order to recover shortfalls from a member.

The new part of the Act will expand the program to allow feedlots direct access to the livestock loan guarantee program as individual entitles. These new parts are required to allow feedlots to obtain a loan guarantee without having to join the association that pools resources, assurance fund deposits to purchase cattle. Individual loan guarantees will be provided.

We believe that the efforts of these changes will be to facilitate continued expansion of the Saskatchewan feeding sector.

Under this new option, loan guarantees will be provided to lenders on loans made directly to feedlots for the purchase of feeder cattle. Guarantees to lenders will be at 25 per cent of loans outstanding at the time of the loss.

And finally, the new part will allow the creation of pooled assurance funds containing contributions by all participants in the feedlot, as well as an individual assurance fund for each participant. Increased assurance fund deposits will be required from the operator and monitoring of operations and financial status of the feedlot will be carried out to a limited risk . . . to limit the risk of the guarantee.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that these changes will have a positive impact on the livestock sector in rural Saskatchewan and on the provincial economy for years to come, and assist us in growing the livestock industry in Saskatchewan into the future.

Therefore I move that amendments to The Farm Financial Stability Act be read a second time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation that the Minister of Agriculture has brought forward, I think certainly has some positive changes to the legislation, especially when it comes to feedlot . . . feeder cattle and feedlot operations in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years and in the constituency of Moosomin and certainly along the eastern side of the province, we've seen a real expansion of feedlot operations. We've seen many producers moving into the area.

And those producers, Mr. Speaker, are coming into the area and turning what some producers thought was good grain production land back into livestock production as they've realized the benefits of some of this marginal land that was put into . . . under cultivation a number of years ago as being actually parcels of land that contributed much greater to livestock development and enhancement.

And as a result, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen producers moving back into the livestock sector, we have certainly as well experienced co-op . . . feeder co-operatives in our constituency, and what it has meant for many producers, agriculture and non-agricultural individuals, who have invested in these feeder feedlot operations.

Mr. Speaker, currently we have a feedlot operation just in working . . . In fact, it just opened south of Grenfell this past spring, and a feedlot that I believe today has roughly the capacity for some 6,500 head. And I understand they're moving ahead with an expansion that will raise the level of livestock in that feedlot by another 1,500 head to 8,000 head, Mr. Speaker.

And so, I'm sure the investors in that cattle feeder program will be looking at this legislation. They'll be looking at the changes that have been made. And they will be determining whether or not the changes are adequate enough to protect them and to protect their investment in the livestock sector, and certainly in this feeder operation that they've all become members of.

(15:45)

I say that, Mr. Speaker, because as well in our area, certainly up in that Moosomin-Rocanville area, there was a cattle feeder operation a number of years ago — actually not that long ago — that ran into a major problem.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest problems and one of the biggest hurts that came about as a result of that feeder operation was that there were a number of producers who invested and became members of the co-operative. Unfortunately, when the co-operative started to experience problems and losses and declared bankruptcy, the lending institutions, Mr. Speaker, went back after the individual producers and their own individual livestock herds, even though they weren't tied to this feeder operation.

And I think that, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, the fact that one of the amendments is going to facilitate the administration of the program by allowing the association to brand program cattle.

Mr. Speaker, if this program would have been in place, in order to . . . If the association would have been allowed to or if the association would have branded the cattle, and specifically branded the cattle based on the investor and their investment in those livestock, I think it would have protected a lot of individual producers from the lending institutions then coming back at them for their own personal livestock herds, which at the end of the day resulted in not only a loss in their investment

in that feeder operation but it also meant that it cost them in their own personal operation, as the lending institutions went after them to recover the losses that resulted as a result of the feeder operation facing difficult times.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister has talked about, the government has talked about, my colleague caucus members have talked about as well, that a livestock investment in the province is one of the areas that we will see a major change in and this province is going to have to move in the direction of, in order to see an enhanced economic growth in the province of Saskatchewan, and certainly in the agricultural sector.

And I believe what we will see, Mr. Speaker, as we've seen in the number of hog operations that have sprung up across the province of Saskatchewan, we see many situations where individuals have become shareholders in hog operations. We're going to see more feeder cattle operations where businessmen and women, where in farm families or individuals are going to become members of feeder operations.

And each and every one of these individuals are going to look at that particular operation that they become a member of, they are going to take a look at the viability of that operation, whether or not that feeder feedlot option is something that is worthy of their investment in, and whether or not it's an investment that in, over the long term . . . Well it'll take some time, Mr. Speaker, and we're all aware of that. Whenever you invest in something it takes a period of time for your investment to begin to return dividends and rewards on your investment.

And so I think it's important and we believe it's important that we have safety features in place that will ensure that these feeder operations indeed will meet the expectations of the investors and will give people the confidence to invest, not only in a local enterprise but also to begin to invest in the province of Saskatchewan.

For you see, Mr. Speaker, when individuals invest in feeder operations across the province, it's not just investing in a local economic and job-creating investment or enterprise in their community, but it's an investment in our province as well, Mr. Speaker. It's an investment in the youth of our province and the job opportunities for young people in the province of Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I look at this piece of legislation, I look at a number of the amendments that the minister is suggesting that we need to look at, we need to come forward with. I look at the number of groups that the minister is telling us that he and his colleagues and the Department of Agriculture have had discussions with, in coming forward with these amendments to this piece of legislation.

I think, Mr. Speaker, what we see here is we certainly see that a number of people have shown a great deal of interest. We've seen individuals show interest in enhancing livestock investment opportunities in the province of Saskatchewan.

But we also see, Mr. Speaker, that individuals themselves have been willing to come forward and, where there've been mistakes made in the past, bring forward these suggestions as to how we can better serve the agriculture community and the

livestock sector and the feeder operations in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that there will be a number of questions that will arise as we enter into further debate on this piece of legislation. However I believe at this time, in order to facilitate greater discussion, and discussion with the concerned groups and individuals, that it would be appropriate for us at this time to adjourn this piece of legislation.

So at this time I move that we adjourn the debate on The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 27 — The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2003. Mr. Speaker, this Act governs the creation and administration of condominium developments and condominium corporations, of which there are hundreds if not thousands in the province.

The Act establishes the rights and responsibilities of developers, condominium owners, and condominium boards, and attempts to balance different and sometimes competing interests.

Since the Act is used on a daily basis by non-professional condominium owners and boards, the provisions of the Act must respond to their concerns and provide clear guidance. The Act is amended every few years to address the issues raised by persons living in and managing condominiums, of which as I said, Mr. Speaker, there are thousands and thousands in our province.

The Condominium Property Act, 1993 currently provides that the entire condominium complex constitutes one parcel for the purposes of property tax assessment. Each owner's individual share of the property taxes is then determined by that owner's unit factor.

Unit factors are established by the developer at the time the condominium is registered at the land titles office and are usually based on the size of each unit relative to every other unit. Generally speaking, unit factors govern an owner's share of the votes in the condominium, an owner's share of the common expenses for maintenance, an owner's share of insurance premiums, and the owner's share of property taxes to be paid.

And I think you can see, Mr. Speaker, that the unit factor probably makes sense in terms of determining the number of votes, the share of common expenses, and the like, but it does not necessarily make sense with respect to the share of property taxes to be paid. Because in other areas we determine property taxes on the basis of market value.

So although the method of apportionment on the basis of unit factor is equitable and fair for most condominium owners, it is not always fair. For certain types of developments and some condominium owners, it is inequitable. And the proposed

amendment incorporates a more equitable assessment approach by providing for assessment based on the value of each unit, which is what we do for others as well, other homeowners.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the provision in the current Act providing that only the corporation can appeal the taxes, is removed. The general rule in assessment legislation is that a person with an interest may appeal property tax respecting a parcel. In the case of a condominium unit, an owner, similarly to any other residential property owner, would have an interest and may appeal. If all the owners wish to appeal, the corporation could act as an agent on behalf of the owners. No specific legislative changes are required for this to occur, but an amendment will clarify the matter.

An amendment will also clarify the insurance provisions for condominium corporations regarding the corporation's duty to ensure insurance deductibles and annual reporting requirements.

Mr. Speaker, insurers and condominium experts have requested that the insurance provisions be reviewed to add clarity. The current provisions give rise to a lack of consistency in insurance coverage. Attempts by condominium boards to apply the provisions in a way that maintains premiums and claims at a lower level may be resulting in underinsurance by corporations and condominium owners so that some corporations and individual owners risk financial losses in the future.

The current provisions also do not address the issue of insurance deductibles or who must pay the deductible in the event of loss or damage. A provision is added to allow the insurance deductible to be charged back to unit owners in particular circumstances.

Although the Act currently requires condominium corporations to have adequate reserve funds for major repairs to and replacements of common facilities, many condominium corporations have totally inadequate funds. A provision is added requiring condominium corporations to have a reserve fund study done on a periodic basis. Regulations will prescribe the specifics respecting time periods between studies, persons who may do the studies, and the information the studies must include.

The regulations may provide for certain types of condominiums that will not be required to do reserve fund studies. Some exemptions may be, for example, non-residential condominiums, bare land condominiums — these are condominiums where the only common property is an access road — and apartments converted to condominiums where none of the units are being sold.

Other amendments address the difficult problems condominium corporations face when one or more owners do not pay their share of the common expenses. The corporation is obliged by the Act to maintain and insure the common property and common facilities, so if some owners do not pay their share other owners subsidize them.

Currently the corporation can place a lien against the owner's title, which assists in collecting the outstanding expenses. An amendment gives priority to a condominium corporation's lien where the corporation has notified holders of other interests on

the owner's title, such as a mortgage company, of the condominium corporation's lien.

The Act will also provide that a mortgage lender with a mortgage on an owner's unit can pay condominium fee arrears and add this amount to the mortgage. To ensure that condominium corporations do not unduly penalize the owner with fees in arrears, a provision is added to provide that the regulations can prescribe the maximum interest rate on overdue payments.

Another amendment, Mr. Speaker, provides that a condominium corporation may have bylaws respecting an owner's right to vote where his or her condominium fees are in arrears. Where the condominium corporation has not passed bylaws dealing with this matter, the Act includes provisions restricting an owner's right to vote when condominium fees are in arrears. In other words the general rule will be, if you haven't paid your dues you can't vote unless the condominium corporation self-decides that you should still have the right to vote.

Condominium corporations typically use the name the developer gave to the project as their official name. The Act provides that the legal name of a corporation is, quote, "The Owners: Condominium Corporation" plus a nine-digit number assigned by the corporations branch. So for example, usually, The Owners: Condominium Corporation No. 123456789, for example.

There have been numerous requests over the years to allow condominium corporations to use the name that they call their complex as their legal name. The condominium corporation's registry has been created by the corporations branch. The existence of this registry provides a process to allow a condominium corporation to change its legal name from the number to the actual common name that is used in everyday life by the owners. In most cases this will be the name the corporation commonly uses.

(16:00)

There are a number of amendments in the Act to improve consumer protection, clarify procedures for amending the condominium plan and titles, and facilitate administration of condominium corporations.

An amendment responds to problems sometimes encountered by condominium corporations because the Act does not have rules respecting proxy voting by owners. The Act will provide guidance to the corporations and to condominium owners respecting the form and effectiveness of a proxy.

The Act allows regulations to be made requiring the approval of other owners in a condominium complex where one owner is planning to redivide his or her unit.

The proposed amendments are expected to result in more financially stable condominium corporations and fewer disputes with these corporations.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments were developed with assistance and co-operation from a large group of consultees respecting

individuals and organizations with an interest in condominiums. Consultations have occurred with representatives from the Canadian Condominium Institute, individual condominium owners, property managers, the insurance industry, municipal assessors, the Saskatchewan Home Builders' Association, the mortgage lenders' association, and lawyers with expertise in condominium law.

These amendments represent a significant consensus in the approach to address concerns raised by condominium owners.

Mr. Speaker, living in condominiums is becoming more and more common in our province. We are working with people that reside in condominiums to make the Act more workable and sensible for them.

And I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Condominium Property Act, 1993.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I speak to this piece of legislation, I'd like to ask leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to the members of this Legislative Assembly an individual who really isn't . . . that most members are quite familiar with and have had the opportunity of working with.

Well one of the members says, not most members, but I think most members would recognize the former member from Weyburn who served in many cabinet positions and . . . namely Education and Finance.

And I'd like the members, as we've already heard already from across the floor some of the comments, remembrances of this member, I'd like to introduce to the Assembly — reintroduce to the Assembly — Mr. Lorne Hepworth who served in this . . . so ably in this Assembly. I'd like to invite members to welcome Mr. Hepworth back to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 27 — The Condominium Property Amendment Act, 2003 (continued)

Mr. Toth: — We talk about condominiums and the use of condominiums and, Mr. Speaker, the minister has already indicated that we are beginning to see more and more condominium properties being developed across the province of Saskatchewan, most notably in our large urban centres, as more and more people reach the age of retirement.

We see, Mr. Speaker, many individuals who are actually fairly young as they hit the retirement years and maybe not

necessarily always that young, but are probably a lot healthier than they have been in the past. And many people are looking at ways in which they can live in properties in the province of Saskatchewan and yet look at retiring and doing some travelling, whether it be worldwide or across certainly to the southern parts of the southern states or indeed to properties in say, Mexico and South America in their retirement years.

And as they do this, Mr. Speaker, they're doing it and they don't like, they really don't want the hassle of a private property that they have to ask someone to be looking after. So they look at properties like condominium properties which are very well looked after, are very comfortable to live in, Mr. Speaker, and it gives these retirees the ability to go away for a period of time, knowing that their individual property is being well looked after.

And, Mr. Speaker, I know some of my colleagues have looked at condominium properties. And needless to say that my colleague, the critic for Finance, has also . . . I think one of the questions he will be asking of the minister is, is the protections that are there. And I'm not exactly sure if this piece of legislation identifies some of those needs.

But I do notice that one of the areas that certainly is being spoken about is the level of taxation on property and condominium properties. I believe the minister is right when he speaks about the fact that there are different levels of condominiums, the size of the condominium you buy.

And if the property that you purchase happens to be considerably larger than your neighbour's condominium unit, to be taxed at the same level, I think we can hear and understand why some people may say, well that's not necessarily fair, my property is maybe 1,000 square feet whereas my neighbour's property happens to be 1,700 square feet. And it would only seem legitimate that while you pay more for the unit, that it's a larger unit, therefore you would assume that you would have a larger tax burden versus the person with the smaller property.

What I'm seeing in this piece of legislation to date, Mr. Speaker, is the amendments are addressing some of the inequities in the current Act. Certainly the areas when it comes to insurance, we see some changes that will bring about some equities in regards to The Condominium Property Act.

And, Mr. Speaker, I haven't had an opportunity to go in-depth and to review the Act in-depth to have a total knowledge of a number of the changes that the minister is talking about. I believe, Mr. Speaker, there are issues here that we need to look at very closely, take a little more in-depth look at, review of The Condominium Property Act, 2003.

And therefore, having just made a few short comments, I look forward to addressing at greater length some of the other issues in regards to this Act, but at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

**Northern Affairs
Vote 75**

Subvote (NA01)

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. To my immediate right is Alan Parkinson, deputy minister. And right directly behind Mr. Parkinson is Cheryl Stecyk, the business manager for Northern Affairs.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair, it certainly is a pleasure and as I hear from the House this afternoon, Mr. Chair, it's a pleasure on everybody's behalf that I'm here this afternoon to spend a few moments with the minister and his officials. Welcome, Mr. Minister, and welcome this afternoon to your officials. It's a pleasure to be able to continue on where we left off about a month ago, Mr. Minister.

Mr. Minister, I want to review some of the areas that were covered last time. There was some incomplete answers. You were unable to provide answers at that time because you weren't sure at that time and wanted to be able to have some time to be able to review them. And I think what we'll start with, with the easy one to begin with, Mr. Minister, in the area of municipal housing for . . .

The Chair: — Order. Order. As interesting . . . Order. As interesting as the conversations are, the item before the committee are the consideration of estimates for the Department of Northern Affairs.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair of Committees. Well, Mr. Minister, it's certainly creating a lot of enthusiasm in the Chamber this afternoon, the Northern Affairs estimates, and so we'll try to keep that enthusiasm up.

I want to, Mr. Minister, go back to the area of municipal housing, and certainly in the specific area for northern . . . in the northern part of the province, in the northern administrative district. And, Mr. Minister, you didn't know at the last time what effects the reduction in the budget for municipal housing was going to have in northern Saskatchewan.

And I'm wondering if you'd be able to provide for us to date, Mr. Minister, has the Department of Northern Affairs been informed by the Minister for community relations — I believe it's called now, Mr. Minister — as to the effect of the reduction in spending for low-cost and affordable housing in this province and what effect that's going to have on northern Saskatchewan?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And welcome back. I just wanted to welcome the member from Saskatchewan Rivers back to the Assembly. It's nice seeing a familiar face in the Northern Affairs critic area.

But in reference to the Community Resources and Employment department, when it comes to housing in general I would refer all issues of housing to the appropriate minister — you know, the minister from Moose Jaw Wakamow . . . or Moose Jaw North, sorry. Of course he is the minister and certainly he puts

the North in many of the things that he's doing.

(16:15)

And I can point out that some of the programs that we've enjoyed seeing in the North and continue to see is the remote housing program. I think we've had well over 100 houses built in northern Saskatchewan. And that is certainly something that I think that the people of the North continue to appreciate and support.

And for example, one of the communities that has taken full advantage of the remote housing program — as the member may or may not know and probably doesn't know — has been the community of Buffalo Narrows, where we've seen a great number of families that have taken advantage of the remote housing program, and where this program really allows them to establish home ownership. And the home ownership aspect of course promotes pride and independence, and being able to do your own thing. And that's exactly what we envision here on this side of the House.

And Northern Affairs certainly supports that as well because throughout our many travels people have told us certainly there's social housing needs which the government has met. There's always the demand for that because there's a lot of young families and people. Of course, the northern Saskatchewan communities are growing so the social housing aspect is very important, that we continue building on that particular stock, so to speak. But as well there also has to be families that are working. They're looking forward to owning their own homes.

So there's a wide variety of processes that we undertake, everything from, you know, from the remote housing program, to the home adaptations for seniors, to social housing.

We look at a number of other aspects such as the mortgage reduction program where people are finally getting recognized for some of the challenges of providing housing in the North. Now as well, we have the centenary affordable housing program, which is a \$6 million program. And again those are just a brief sketch of what we're trying to do in . . . when it comes to housing in northern Saskatchewan.

And again, as Minister for Northern Affairs, we have this very good working relationship with the minister responsible for housing, and he would be able to give you a more in-depth answer as to the wide variety of programs we have right across the North.

I think the premise, and I can quote the minister on this one, when him and I had discussions and I asked him as the minister responsible for housing, as Northern Affairs minister, I'd like to know what your position is when it comes to the housing stock of northern Saskatchewan.

And the minister in his exact words said this, and he said, he said:

I support 100 per cent the people of northern Saskatchewan having home ownership and will exhaust every avenue to make sure that happens.

And those were his words, Mr. Speaker.

And certainly, Mr. Chairman, certainly I want to point out to the member opposite that this is some of the things that are going to . . . is going to happen, and I make reference again to the remote housing program. It's a fantastic program. People have been asked to continue on the program, and by golly, we're going to continue on with the program.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, to the minister, I'll first ask this question. On April 14 I had made the, I guess, false assumption that you would have maybe talked with the minister in between and maybe with his department and tried to glean from him just where the municipal housing portfolio was at in regards to northern Saskatchewan. After all, we have been led to believe on this side of the House, Mr. Minister, that Northern Affairs acts as a liaison between northern Saskatchewan and the provincial government.

And yet, we find out today that you still have no answer as to what effect, from a Northern Affairs perspective, this reduction in municipal housing is going to have on northern Saskatchewan.

So, Mr. Minister, I think now that we're done with that one, I want to move on to a specific issue in the mining sector and if you'd be able to inform the House today, from a Northern Affairs perspective, Mr. Minister, what you know or what your department knows about the issues surrounding the flooding of the mine in northern Saskatchewan, the uranium mine in northern Saskatchewan. And would you be able to indicate to the House what state of success the mining company is having at clearing the water out of the mine and how soon your department . . . Has your department, Mr. Minister, been informed as to how soon this mine might be starting up again?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. What I want to point out is the . . . As we explained and the member very well knows that in the event that we do have questions in reference to housing or questions on highways or questions to health care, that the appropriate minister will of course be answering questions in this Assembly.

As Minister of Northern Affairs, we do liaison with the various departments and explain to them what our strategy when it comes to northern Saskatchewan is. And we certainly have and will continue to press home . . . forward the whole notion that Northern Affairs and northern Saskatchewan people are very important.

So I guess my point being is that if you have questions specific for Sask Housing then I'd ask you to refer the appropriate questions to the appropriate minister. That's how the Assembly works.

And secondly, in terms of the . . . when you say you're under the false assumption that I'd have answers for you in reference to how the housing budget works, well as we all know in this Assembly, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers operates under false assumptions on many occasions in the Assembly and certainly I think on a few fronts you have been caught red-handed using the false assumption argument.

And the other issue, in reference to the mine site, again I'll point out that we are in constant communication with Cameco. I understand now that the amount of water coming into the mine shaft is a lot less than it originally started off with and they're having success at draining the, draining the mine site. And all that information certainly is being forwarded to Environment to make sure there are no environmental concerns.

We do monitor the surface rights agreement as Northern Affairs and we're encouraging them to continue employing northerners and keeping northerners on staff. We understand there may be a six-month delay to restarting up the mill and the whole mine site, and we understand that there's been better progress than anticipated. But still, while they're optimistic that perhaps they can shorten that time frame, they're still holding the six-month time frame as to when the mine might be starting up again.

And again, we want to see the mining sector in northern Saskatchewan continue to grow and to continue to prosper and to continue hiring northerners because mining activity, as you know, in the province of Saskatchewan is certainly a very, very big employer and a very, very big industry. And we in Northern Affairs want to continue to support them.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess, you know, previous statements by previous ministers in this House . . . A previous minister has indicated to us that the Department of Northern Affairs was on top of issues in northern Saskatchewan and I'm glad you corrected that for us. For you know, we were certainly hoping that that would have been the case but, you know, certainly there are other departments that look after these issues. And so I think you've helped us fill in that void very adequately at this time and we certainly thank you for that, Mr. Minister.

But, Mr. Minister, you raised an issue that I wanted to get to also, was the surface rights agreement that the Department of Northern Affairs negotiates on behalf of the province. I think everyone needs to clearly understand that mining companies in northern Saskatchewan have to deal with the Department of Environment and Resource Management, they have to deal with the Department of Industry and Resources, they have to deal with the Department of Northern Affairs, and certainly they have to also deal with a myriad of Crown corporations in order to be able to establish a mine in northern Saskatchewan.

Mr. Minister, you talked about the land agreements that you negotiate on behalf of the province with the uranium companies for mining in northern Saskatchewan. Would you be able to indicate to the House today that, because of the complexities of trying to establish a uranium mine in northern Saskatchewan, the doubling up, Mr. Minister, of reviews of the uranium process in northern Saskatchewan, has there been any movement by your government through the Department of Northern Affairs to try to streamline the system, to have uranium mines come on stream at a quicker pace than we have in the past, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much for the question. One of the things I think is important is when we start talking about particular processes, is that the member very well knows is that in this day and age environmental rules and regulations are very important. And I'm hoping that member is not

suggesting that we lessen some of the environmental rules and regulations.

And from our perspective we just want to make sure that we assure the public that industry and government are working very closely and working very co-operatively and ensuring that they do a number of things, whether it's labour standards to protect workers' health or whether it's environmental standards to protect the environment, certainly moving the economy forward, the creation of jobs. All that is very important from our perspective in Northern Affairs when we talk about mining companies and their role to stimulate the economy in the North.

Through the surface rights agreement we also are very careful in Northern Affairs to ensure one thing, and that's totally contrary to what that member's cousins done in the 1980s when they come along and they said, look, mining companies, as Tory government, as Saskatchewan Party, Sask-a-Tory government, we don't believe that northerners should be positioned well when it comes to employment in some of these northern mines. That member knows that, that member knows that. That member knows that very, very clearly.

When they say today, what are you doing to help the northern . . . Let me explain what they've done, Mr. Chairman. They come along and they say to us, in northern Saskatchewan, these surface lease agreements, we're not going to guarantee employment for northerners. So bang, went down from 50 per cent down to 18, 19 per cent northerners working at these northern mines.

And they all of a sudden said, oh contractors, we're not going to work with you as well; we're not going to work with the northern contractors. They lived there all their life but it doesn't mean anything to us. Bang, went down to 18 or \$19 million worth of northern contractors' work in northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

And that's why this morning when that member talks about credibility and arguing some credible facts, I say to the people of Saskatchewan that there's a lot of things that flip-flop in this world from pancakes to eggs and to the member from Saskatchewan Rivers.

But I'll point out this, that as a result of some of the surface rights that we have negotiated, this administration and this government has negotiated, we have went from 18 to 19 per cent employment by northern Saskatchewan people in the 1990s up to well over 50 per cent, Mr. Chairman. And not only that. When it comes to northern contractors, Mr. Chairman, we went from 18 or \$19 million to well over \$200 million in northern contractors.

And why, Mr. Speaker, why did we do that? Because we felt if they're going to have activity in northern Saskatchewan's backyard, then northerners should be positioned just as well, if not greater, than southerners when it comes to sharing the employment opportunity of some of the resources in their backyard. And isn't that fair, Mr. Speaker? Isn't that social and economic justice that we often talk about? That is the right thing to do.

So when that member comes along and says, what are you

doing to help out, what are you doing to streamline, well let me explain it to you. We continue to hold the core values that we have as a government and ensuring that we have good environmental protection, that we have northern participation, and that we continue stimulating the economy. And that takes a lot of work. That takes a lot of balancing and certainly takes a lot of commitment, Mr. Chairman.

Right now we have an individual, Carol Rowlett, and Carol is in constant communication on behalf of Northern Affairs with the mining companies to talk about surface rights.

And we're also engaging with the environmental quality committees to make sure that they're aware of some of the challenges that some of the mining companies face, and as well some of the opportunities that they may present to the North.

The whole notion here, Mr. Chairman, is to make sure that we don't put undue and repetitive processes in front of the mining companies. We want them to know that we're creating an atmosphere for business to thrive and to exist, all the while making sure we have that balance. And that's why we're constantly engaged in some of these processes of we're sitting down with the federal government and saying, can we in some way, shape, or form coordinate better approval processes — not diminish them nor lessen them, but make it more streamlined so that the mining company is able to come to one place and say, this is where I'm coming to get my approvals. And that the federal and provincial governments don't have to have separate processes, thereby time-consuming processes, frustrating the mining companies. We want to work very closely with that.

(16:30)

But that member knows when it comes to organizations like the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission that it doesn't matter if we issue a licence; if they don't have a licence from the federal regulator, then no uranium company can open up that particular mine. That member understands that, he knows that.

So today I tell him — and he knows very well, Mr. Chairman, he knows very well — that we're doing our very best to streamline those processes in Northern Affairs, all the while protecting the core values of working with the northern contractors, of employing northern people, of making sure that you watch the environment, and of making sure that they continue telling the mining companies that they're welcome in northern Saskatchewan, their investment is very much needed in our province, and together we will build this province.

And together, there's no question in my mind that our future is wide open. If you'd quit the politics and stop putting these supposed theories up from the opposition . . . And people in the North say, when are these guys going to stop their whining and complaining and their complaining and their whining and their doom and gloom?

And I sit there and I go, oh my goodness, when are you guys going to have a bit of optimism? Like people don't want to see whiners and crybabies talking about the North; they want to see people that are optimistic, people that are aggressive, and people that believe in Saskatchewan. That's the message of northern Saskatchewan people.

And I look across the way, and I look across the way, Mr. Chairman, and all I see is a big bunch of whiners and a bunch of crybaby flip-flops. And I say, shame on them. Have confidence in your province, have confidence in your people because at the end of the day, we don't have that confidence, your credibility is shot. And I would say, Mr. Speaker, their credibility is — is shot.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister: Mr. Minister, it . . . certainly we touched on a hot button here. I didn't realize that Greg Ross from Pinehouse was creating so much problems for you up there, and obviously we're on this side of the House, the members here are not going to apologize for that in any way, shape, or form.

I think it's clear to understand, Mr. Minister, that what is happening is that — and you illustrated this very clearly — is that the province can issue a permit for . . . make sure environmental concerns are within satisfactory parameters in regards to uranium mining, but it holds no water unless the federal government also approves the process.

So what we're trying to understand, Mr. Minister, on this side of the House, from the perspective of Northern Affairs when you talk about job creation in northern Saskatchewan, we see this as a roadblock, is that fewer people are going to get to the workplace because of the holdups that are being put in place by your government.

And has your government looked at the regulatory review process for the opening up of new mines, so that once the federal government has approved it — because we know that they are ultimately responsible for the uranium industry in this country — is that, is the province looking at knowing and are comfortable with their review process for the establishment of uranium mines, Mr. Minister? So that we don't have to go through . . . so that once the federal government goes through the regulatory review, that you also have to go through the exact same process all over again.

Has your government looked at helping to reduce the steps and working in conjunction with the different departments that are involved so that we have kind of a one-stop shopping centre as you alluded to, but we know very well, Mr. Minister, it's not in place in this government?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Once again, I'll advise that member that we are constantly engaged in making sure that we're able to refine and to limit duplication of some of the review processes that are necessary.

And some of those questions in reference to the environmental approvals are best handled under Saskatchewan Environment's regulatory process, of course, which will come when the Saskatchewan Environment's estimates are in place. And we'll give you exact play-by-play, day-by-day scenario that we have drawn out for folks in Saskatchewan to understand what we're doing as a government and as a province to work with the mining sector.

As you mentioned before, we think that it's incumbent upon us

and the federal government to have a process that is refined and that meets the obligation of both provincial legislation and federal legislation when it comes to the . . . especially when it comes to the operation of some of the uranium mines in Saskatchewan. We think that certainly the people of Saskatchewan need to have extra assurance that the activity happening with the uranium mining industry is there from the environmental perspective, worker safety, etc., etc. We feel that all mines . . . gold mines, you know, whatever mines that are out there, you know that they certainly have to have an environmental component to them.

But they needn't have five or six different regulatory review processes by the federal government, by the provincial government, by other agencies, and so on and so forth. If we can find ways in which we can streamline those processes, we will undertake to find every possible way.

And we can give you more detailed information through the Saskatchewan Environment's estimates, at which point I would have access to all the officials that are working under EMPA, which is The Environmental Management and Protection Act. They would give us detailed information.

Of course this is during Northern Affairs estimates and we are primarily concerned with the surface rights agreement that talked a lot about the EQCs' (Environmental Quality Committees) role and the employment and so on and so forth. So we can certainly do that then if the minister so wishes.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, this whole series of questions certainly does lead around to the responsibilities of your Department of Northern Affairs and its role that it plays in the nuclear industry in this province.

You talk very clearly, you're leading the House to believe, Mr. Minister, that your department is playing a leading role in ensuring that northerners are going to be employed with the opening up of these new mines, that surface rights agreements are signed that ensure that the people of northern Saskatchewan are not left out of the process.

So on the one hand you're saying one thing and on the other hand your government's doing another.

If you're working towards a process to increase employment in northern Saskatchewan, but what you do is that you put roadblocks in the way to delay employment for people of northern Saskatchewan, we're not sure that, Mr. Minister, that you're completely onside with your government on this issue, because your government has clearly stated that they are going to bog down the process as much as they can, to throw as many roadblocks up that will impede the development of uranium industry in northern Saskatchewan.

And so then maybe you might want to have a chat with the new Industry minister to find out just where all that is at and he'll be able to inform you as to the process that's going on inside your government. Because I think, Mr. Minister, the people of northern Saskatchewan clearly understand that the uranium industry is not being taken advantage of to the degree that it could, that the roadblocks that have been put in place by the people . . . by your government, Mr. Minister, is impeding the

opportunities for job creation in northern Saskatchewan — job creation for the people of northern Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister.

And so I'm wondering if — the comments that you have made today — you can assure the Assembly today, Mr. Minister, that these comments are not only being said here in the House but are actually being said at the cabinet table.

And that the cabinet table is actually starting to think that the minister from Northern Affairs is right — that the regulatory process is too expanded right now, that you can meet all the concerns that you've talked about, that jobs are going to be created in northern Saskatchewan, that people from northern Saskatchewan are going to be able to participate in that job creation, that the environmental concerns are going to be met to ensure that workers' safety is also going to be met without the entire expanded review processes that mining companies have to go through now for expansion of the nuclear industry.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Well thank you very much. And I'd like to challenge the member on a couple of points.

First of all, I would ask the member not to put words in my mouth because I didn't say it was too expanded right now in terms of the regulatory process that mining companies have to go through. What I've said is that there is processes in place that look at a wide spectrum of things or a host of concerns that the mining company has to go through to ensure that we have a very thorough public process and public knowledge undertaking, so that people understand what is being proposed and what is being developed at a particular site.

Now what I've said, for the member's information, is that I said that we need to look and continually look and strive for a more refined system where we're not having duplication of some of the processes that the federal government and the provincial government take. Now there are obviously a relationship that we have to continue building and we will continue building.

And I'll give you more details on the manner in which we refined those processes through the Saskatchewan Environment's estimates where we'll have access to the officials who can give us, quite frankly, very good knowledge on some of the activities happening right to the minute. So I wanted to correct that as well.

And secondly, when you mentioned, you want to bog down development of the North or you want to put up roadblocks, where is your evidence of that when you mention that? You know, I questioned the member's . . . his whole notion of his credibility when he makes statements of that nature. Like does anybody hold you accountable for saying those statements?

So today when you say your government wants to bog down and put up roadblocks in northern development, where is your information? Like what is it exactly are you saying today? And that is the question I have of you. And I want to challenge you on that in terms of the credibility. Where is that we're stating in this government that we want to do that? There is no evidence whatsoever of that. And I would ask the member today why he would continue making some of the statements that aren't quite factually on target on many fronts.

And that's one of the areas where we as a government have not bogged down developing the North; where we as a government have not put up roadblocks. I continually say that because that's a fact.

And our Minister of Industry and Resources has done more to create jobs. We talk about the thousands of new jobs this year. Well that's not bogging down, that's stimulating. On this side of the House it's called stimulation; perhaps on that side when we see great progress it's called bogged down.

Well, Mr. Speaker, or Mr. Chairman, I believe this government has done a tremendous job to work with the mining sectors. And people, especially the mining sector themselves, they say to us, environmental protection is very important. We take that role seriously as a province. Worker safety is very important is what the mining companies say. Well we agree and we concur.

They say economic stimulation is also very important — absolutely. Diversification of our economy — absolutely. You're talking about creating an environment for business that's thriving to exist— absolutely. We believe in that as well.

So we all have the same vision, the same goal for Saskatchewan. And about the only people that come along and say you're trying to bog down the industry is you guys. Now where'd you get that information from? I'd really like to know where you got that information from. If you have a letter or if you have something in *Hansard* or if you have some process in place, just let us see it. And for once then I would guarantee you, I would accept some of your criticism.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, that member talks a lot about different scenarios over here. And I would ask him, if he has the courage to stand up and say some of these things, then he should have the conviction to provide some of that proof to us here in the Assembly that our government said some of these things.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. To the minister, and certainly after the next provincial election there will be a few members left on the government side of the House that'll be able to ask the next member from Athabasca, Greg Ross, all those questions and Greg will certainly be pleased to provide those answers. Because we know quite clearly that this government's on its way out.

And as much as they enjoy that they want to participate in estimates from the opposition side, Mr. Chair, we'll certainly want to provide the NDP lots of opportunity to do that right after the next election.

Mr. Minister, there is one more issue I'd like to get covered before the end of the day. Mr. Minister, there's been a concern that's been raised about fishing in northern Saskatchewan.

And we know that the Department of Northern Affairs, Mr. Minister, provides to northern fishermen a subsidy because your NDP government has decided in their wisdom to close down fish plants in Saskatchewan and have all fish processing done in Winnipeg. You've agreed to that. There's certainly plenty of evidence that it's not well supported, that notion, in northern Saskatchewan.

But, Mr. Minister, I want to ask you specifically about one area in northern Saskatchewan that has been brought to my attention, and that's Lake Athabasca. And I'm wondering, Mr. Minister, if you can inform the House today the amount of the quota for fish to be taken commercially on Lake Athabasca and roughly the percentage that your department is aware of, of the success for commercial fishing on Lake Athabasca.

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. What I would point out first of all is — it's very important for people in northern Saskatchewan; I think they understand this as well — is once again when his cousin, Grant Devine, was in power, they tried to do away with commercial fishing.

And once again that member stands up in this Assembly and says to the people of Saskatchewan, this government tried to do away with commercial fishing. Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Chairman, we have not done away with commercial fishing. We have in fact enhanced commercial fishing.

And some of the things we're working on, Mr. Speaker, we spent over \$1 million — \$1 million — on trying to upgrade some of the fish plants throughout the North; we have not closed any fish plants in northern Saskatchewan.

And if he were to contact his candidate, Mr. Ross, and ask these questions before he comes into the Assembly, Mr. Ross I'm sure would concur with him that they have not shut down any fish plants. In fact, Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do, what we are trying to do is we're trying to protect lakes, we're trying to protect quotas. We're actually trying to bring a fish processing option, a plant from Winnipeg to Saskatchewan.

And this is to enhance commercial fishing, Mr. Speaker; it's not to do away with commercial fisherman.

And everybody knows in northern Saskatchewan that the commercial fisherman industry is strong, it's vital, it's going to continue to grow, and it's going to continue to match what the tourism fishing industry is doing, much like . . . much unlike the Grant Devine Tories when that member was proudly carrying the banners in the 1980s, when they tried to do away with commercial fisherman.

And the commercial fisherman said to them, no way José. And guess what? Today the commercial fisherman and their industry is strong, it's vital, and it's building. And this government and Northern Affairs will continue to help.

And for clarification purposes, Mr. Speaker — and that member talks about credibility — when he introduced his candidate here several weeks ago, he mentioned that Mr. Ross was the mayor of Pinehouse. And I got a news flash, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Ross has not been the mayor at Pinehouse for a number of years. The mayor of Pinehouse is Cecile Caisse.

And I'm going to forward *Hansard* to Ms. Caisse and tell her here's what these guys are doing to prop up their candidate at your expense.

So, Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is the mayor of Pinehouse is

Cecile Caisse, and no, Northern Affairs is not doing away with commercial fishing, they're not shutting down fish plants. Yes, Northern Affairs is going to build and help work with the mining sector. And again that flip-flopping member from Saskatchewan Rivers should get it right.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I'm going to . . . I'll have to repeat the question, I guess, to the minister. And, Mr. Deputy Chair, maybe what I'll do is I'll speak a little slower so that he doesn't get confused by the question again.

The question, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister was, how many pounds of fish are allotted for commercial fishing in Lake Athabasca each year and what percentage of that commercial catch is taken advantage of?

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Okay. I'll try and write a letter to the minister in big, bold letters identifying the amount that we have identified for the commercial fishing, the commercial fishermen take. And I believe — and I could be corrected on this — it's roughly 1 million pounds that we allow to harvest from Lake Athabasca for commercial fishing purposes. And I could be corrected on that, and I'll forward to the member a nice, big, bold, printed letter indicating the exact amount that Lake Athabasca gets in terms of allocation for commercial fishing.

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister, I think we'll just wind this up and I'll ask one question. And I'll accept that he doesn't know the answer to this, and of course as we found out this afternoon, the minister hasn't known the answer to hardly any questions. So we'll give the minister ample opportunity to come back in the future and be able to answer these questions because Northern Affairs is supposed to be the representative department for the people in the . . . that live in the northern administrative district, and so we want to give him ample opportunity to get caught up on what goes on in that area. So we'll, in the future, we'll give him an opportunity to be able to come back and to do that.

And I want to thank the minister. At least he was honest about one thing, is that he didn't know the answer to how many fish, the quantity of fish that come out of Lake Athabasca every year. And maybe at the same time he could find out for us, Mr. Deputy Chair, the percentage of that allotment that is taken out every year by the commercial fishermen on Lake Athabasca.

And, Mr. Deputy Chair, we also want to point out to the minister that according to the figures that we have had . . . And I want to give the minister an ample opportunity in the future to be able to respond when he comes back up again in estimates, the subsidy that the governments — provincial government — provides to the fishermen in northern Saskatchewan to move their product from northern Saskatchewan to Winnipeg. And if he could provide that information for us, what the exact amount is and if he could indicate to the House if that amount is an adequate enough amount to cover the cost of transportation from the Lake Athabasca region.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Okay. Very quickly, thank you so much for some of the questions. As I mentioned, I'm positive that the amount that we're looking at for harvesting is 1 million

pounds from Lake Athabasca. And no, we're not trying to, you know, continue taking our fish to Winnipeg. We're trying to bring it closer to the commercial fishermen of northern Saskatchewan. That's our goal and that's our objective and we'll continue working forward to that.

And we're all looking forward to some more questions about Northern Affairs because we don't enjoy that privilege during question period — that during estimates is the only time we seem to have any focus on Northern Affairs.

And I would point out as well, in my closing comments, I want to thank the member for some of his interest in commercial fishing. And of course the mining activity, that's something that we want to continue to strive from this end, that we're going to focus on. So when they pick it up they obviously are taking a lead from the government side to push some of these things.

And I want to ask the people of northern Saskatchewan a couple of things before I close here, Mr. Speaker. Number one, who is promoting a \$50 million cut in social services to the disabled groups and to the least advantaged in our community? The Saskatchewan Party. Who's trying to do what commercial . . . away with commercial fishing? The Saskatchewan Party. Who wants to do away with some of the activities we have with the mining sector to promote jobs and to promote contractors? The Saskatchewan Party.

Who wants to do away with . . . Who wants to push things like bulk water exports? There's a lot of rumours out there about bulk water export, shipping our water to the States — a lot of people asking questions about what the agenda is. And those guys have not said one word about what their agenda is.

And people of the North are going to start asking questions, is: do you guys support things like bulk water, do you guys export to the States, do you guys support a number of other things that you want to not tell people about now and then, oh, ask us after the election?

Well I say northern Saskatchewan is not going to tell you guys anything. They're going to send you a loud and proud message that we don't want to see any of your waste nuclear sites. We don't want to see any of your bulk water exports. We don't want to see any of your \$50 million cuts to the disadvantaged people of the province. We don't want none of the Sask Party.

And I say, next election, we'll bring it on, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Chair, and just to wrap up I want to thank the minister and his officials for being here today. I know many times in the past that the officials used to have to come from La Ronge and of course that's not the case any more as they have taken up offices here in Regina. And it certainly must make it a lot more convenient for the minister that his deputy minister is a lot closer to the action here in Regina.

But, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the House, it was a great pleasure to be able to take part in debate this afternoon in regards to estimates for Northern Affairs.

And it was certainly interesting to have the minister get up in his final diatribe and explain to the people of Saskatchewan the misinformation that the government is quite willing to spread out there in the upcoming provincial election. We're certainly going to be quite willing to be able to get into public debate when the Premier calls the election, when he finally screws up his courage.

And from this side of the House, Mr. Deputy Chair, we want to . . . we want the people of Saskatchewan to know that the Premier can screw up his courage at any time. He can, in fact this very day if he wants to, contact the Lieutenant Governor to call a provincial election. The Saskatchewan Party is ready to fight the election right now.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:57.

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