

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today on behalf of the people in my constituency who are really concerned about the high cost of education tax on property.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employees.

The people that have signed this petition are from Englefeld, Wadena, and Watson.

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

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

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again today I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills and constituents from the communities next to my constituency. This has to do with the government's reluctance to renew Crown grazing leases. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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.

Mr. Speaker, the signatories to this particular petition are from the communities of Claydon, Frontier, and Climax.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take necessary action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and

district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

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

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

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of people from the Estevan constituency who are very opposed to the huge increases in crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by people from Benson.

I so present. Thank you.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Saskatchewan who are concerned about the land lease agreements that might be terminated by this government and that the lessees will not have the first option to renew. And the prayer reads:

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Lake Alma, Weyburn, Goodwater, Alida, and Colgate.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again with a petition from residents of southern Saskatchewan who have a concern about the huge area that has no access to adequate health services. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Rockglen and Scout Lake.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of farmers concerned with the rapid increase in the crop insurance premiums. And the prayers reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the best farmers in the province, from Eatonia, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents that are concerned with the condition of a section of Highway 22, that section between Junction 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.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Southey and Strasbourg.

I so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of the 2003 crop insurance premiums. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from Spiritwood, Rabbit Lake, Glenbush, and Medstead.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order a petition presented May 13, 2003 regarding property and school taxes has been reviewed, and pursuant to rule 12(7) is found to be irregular and therefore cannot be read and received.

According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 12, 13, 27, 36, 40,

90, and no. 100.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 44 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Industry and Resources: during the month of November 2002, how much money did the Government of Saskatchewan spend on the Future is Wide Open television ads aired on television stations in Newfoundland?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have just a number of similar questions with slight variations on the date and the location. And I'm pleased to present all of these questions to the minister. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, seated in the east gallery are 24 young people from the Four Directions Childcare Services centre, which is located on the Muskowekwan First Nation. They are accompanied by five chaperones. The leader of the adult group is Mr. George Laliberte.

This child care service, Mr. Speaker, is a new facility that has been put in place very recently and it deals with troubled youth between the ages of 12 and 17, Mr. Speaker. And I'm very pleased that they saw fit to come and visit us here today and I'm looking forward to meeting with them later. And I certainly hope that they — and I know they will — enjoy the proceedings, Mr. Speaker.

And I ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery is Ms. Laura Fellingner, who's a student at the Faculty of Administration at the University of Regina. She has elected to complete the co-operative education option in the Bachelor of Administration degree program and is currently on a work term with the environmental assessment branch of Saskatchewan Environment in Regina. And accompanying Laura today are her two supervisors, Monica Krahe and Brent Bitter.

And I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome Ms. Laura Fellingner here today. Welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well today it's Rosetown Central High, the sequel. And oftentimes sequels are bigger than the first one. And at this time rather than 28 students from Rosetown, we have 33 grade 8 students from Rosetown Central High. And as their MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly), I am pleased to welcome them to our Assembly. I know all of the members will join me in that welcome.

They are accompanied by teachers Ken Boyd, Adele Smith, and Alysia Knowles; and by chaperones Cathy Longtin and Heather Marlowe.

I have the opportunity to meet with these students after question period, and we're going to get our picture taken and do a lot of good things.

So, Mr. Speaker, I would ask you and all members present to welcome the grade 8 class from Rosetown Central High to our Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, as we all know in the Assembly here, our Pages are hard-working individuals, but we have one Page today who is under a little extra pressure because his grandparents and great-grandmother are here.

And I'd like to introduce to all the members three familiar faces to our Page, Luke McWilliams, who come from the city of Moose Jaw. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is Dr. Fred McWilliams, his wife Sonia McWilliams, and Luke's great-grandmother, Mary Huly.

And they've come because they're very proud of the work that their grandson and great-grandson does to keep the operation of democracy going in the province of Saskatchewan.

So I'd like us all to show a warm welcome to Luke McWilliams's grandparents.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Wind Power in Saskatchewan

Mr. Prebble: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you get a sense that Saskatchewan's future truly is wide open when you look at our government's plans for wind power and the excitement that they're generating across our province.

Three years ago there were no wind power facilities in Saskatchewan. But today under our Premier's leadership there are 26 wind turbines generating 17 megawatts of environmentally friendly electricity.

This week SaskPower's development arm, SaskPower International, is actively seeking expressions of interest from private sector partners to enter into joint venture arrangements with SPC (Saskatchewan Power Corporation) as our government moves forward with plans to develop another 150 megawatts of wind generation in our province. The deadline for responses, Mr. Speaker, from interested applicants, is June 16, 2003.

SaskPower International intends to select one or more parties for the joint ventures by September 2003, with plans calling for the first phase of the wind power expansion to commence as early as the 2004-2005 fiscal year.

Mr. Speaker, our government is targeting to have all 150 megawatts of wind power operational by March 2007, about the same amount of electricity as is required for 64,000 homes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SABEX Awards

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night in Saskatoon, the Saskatoon Chamber of Commerce and the Woman Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan recognized business excellence in Saskatoon and the district. And it was an event entitled Celebrate Success. And in particular it was an occasion to award the 2003 SABEX (Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence) awards.

There were four especially distinctive awards, Mr. Speaker. The Athena Award, an award to recognize and celebrate women entrepreneurs. That winner went to Leanne Bellegarde Daniels. The Business of the Year Award was presented to Superior Cabinets which was also a SABEX award winner in the export category. The 2002 Hall of Fame inductee was Wright Construction Western Ltd., a very well-known family business in Saskatoon and this province.

Other SABEX award winners were Independent Medical Rehabilitation, Pine View Farms, Centennial Plumbing, Heating and Electrical, Brainsport, Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority, Black Sun, Norampac, and Rawlco Radio; and finally, an award for innovation to Dr. Kailash Prasad. Congratulations to all.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Atkinson: — Last night in Saskatoon, a special gala event called Celebrate Success was held to present the annual SABEX awards. SABEX stands for Saskatoon Achievement in Business Excellence and the winners are 11 of the reasons Saskatoon's economy is thriving and our future is wide open.

(13:45)

I want to point out at the beginning to all members that the Business of the Year Award went to Superior Cabinets, the local manufacturing company that supplies markets at home and in the western US (United States) and Alberta.

I'm also happy to report that two award winners were found in my constituency of Saskatoon Nutana. Brian Michasiw of Brainsport on Broadway won for Marketing and Rawlco Radio was the Strategic Alliance winner for partnering a charity with a company.

The other winners were Wayne Salloum of SIGA (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) for Community Involvement; Centennial Plumbing, Heating and Electrical for Customer Service; Black Sun, Inc. for Innovation; Norampac, Inc. took the Expansion and Growth Award; Pine View Farms owned by the Boldts of Osler won the award for New Product; Independent Medical Rehabilitation was the SABEX New Business Venture; Saskatoon's Athena Award for professional excellence went to Leanne Bellegarde Daniels; and the

University of Saskatchewan Technologies Award of Innovation in Research was given to Kailash Prasad.

My congratulations to all of these outstanding Saskatoon businesses and individuals who prove truly that our future is wide open.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cluff Lake Mine Honoured

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Cluff Lake uranium mine was recently recognized as Canada's safest metal mine during its last full year of operation. Cluff Lake, owned by COGEMA Resources, Inc., was presented with the prestigious John T. Ryan award by the Canadian Institute of Mining, Metallurgy and Petroleum at its annual convention in Montreal, Monday, May 5, 2003.

Cluff Lake had the lowest lost-time accident rate of any metal mine in the country. The mine reported zero incidents in a period that included 2001 and the first part of 2002, when Cluff Lake was finally mined out after 22 years of operation.

“Winning a John T. Ryan Trophy is a major achievement in any year, but Cluff Lake did it while winding up its operations and with all the distractions that involved,” . . . (stated) Tim Gitzel, President and CEO of COGEMA.”

Mr. Gitzel went on to say:

“. . . Cluff Lake had some of its most productive years ever in 2001 and 2002 with zero accidents and reduced radiation exposure levels for its workers.”

Saskatchewan's uranium mines have a history of winning the John T. Ryan Trophy. Cluff Lake took the award in 1998, Cameco Corporation's McArthur River mine won in 1999, while Cameco's Rabbit Lake won in 2000.

Congratulations to COGEMA Resources, the staff and management of the Cluff Lake mine during that period of time, and to the Saskatchewan uranium mining industry which continues to set national standards for mine safety and for the protection of our environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Orange Zone Challenge

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was very pleased this morning to join the Minister of Highways over in my constituency in Regina South at Campbell Collegiate. The Department of Highways and Transportation, through the partnership with Campbell Collegiate, has encouraged students to enter a contest called the Orange Zone Challenge.

This provided students with an opportunity to use their creativity to develop a 30-second television commercial, a 30-second radio commercial, and a print advertisement. These are being used to make drivers aware of the need for safety in the Orange Zone, which of course are the construction areas. It

also encourages them to obey the 60 kilometre per hour speed limit in that zone.

Mr. Speaker, the winning submission came from a grade 10 student at Campbell named Mark Laprairie. His submission features an animated example of what can happen when you're speeding through that zone.

Another part of his submission was a very unique fine calculator that allows you to figure out how much your fine will be depending on how fast you're going in excess of the speed limit. I'll tell you, I think all of us were a little surprised when we saw some of the numbers this morning, Mr. Speaker.

We are also going to be using the creative material from Katrina Bray, who is a grade 12 student at Campbell who developed a very unique radio commercial and print advertisement, which is really quite remarkable — I think all members will agree when they see it. Both of these very effectively develop the message about staying the speed limit at 60.

Mr. Speaker, this project has allowed students to gain valuable experience and has allowed the department to gain creative advertising that'll get the attention of young drivers.

Again I would ask all members to join with me in congratulating these young students at Campbell Collegiate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Future is Wide Open Promotions

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the past few weeks the taxpayers of Saskatchewan have been witness to a vast array of promotional gimmicks that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government has put forward as part of their Future is Wide Open campaign. Over and over we're seeing promotional ads on TV and the newspapers and other forms of media, at all taxpayers' expense.

Most recently the NDP have decided to purchase promotional items such as T-shirts, toques, and even golf balls. Now the Premier has indicated these items will be available to purchase but also be presented free of charge to visiting dignitaries or CEOs (chief executive officer) from outside Saskatchewan. Price for a dozen golf balls, according to yesterday's *Leader-Post*, will cost \$75; or if you qualify, we're giving it to you free.

Now *The StarPhoenix* has conducted a poll asking people if they would pay \$75 for golf balls with the Future is Wide Open stamped on them — 4 per cent said yes, while a resounding 95 per cent said no.

I would like to inform the Premier that in the past I purchased promotional golf balls — good, quality golf balls — for much less than \$75 per dozen, out of my own pocket. So I would like to present the Premier with the sleeve of my much more affordable Saskatchewan Party golf balls. Cost to the taxpayer, zero.

And I'm sure the Premier will find that these Saskatchewan Party golf balls will go faster and further than the NDP

promotional golf balls.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Bring it here. Speaker's prerogative.

Canada-Wide Science Fair

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, some of the brightest young minds in our province are representing Saskatchewan in a forum where ideas are presented and challenged. I take great pride and pleasure in announcing that 49 students from 12 different Saskatchewan regions are currently competing at the annual Canada-Wide Science Fair that is being held in Calgary from May 11 to 16.

I'm particularly pleased to say that Tamra Knaus and Ross Phillips of Lumsden High School, from my own constituency of Regina Qu'Appelle Valley, won their region for their project — Where Genomics Meet Cystic Fibrosis.

Mr. Speaker, these 49 students have already competed in regional science fairs across the province against more than 1,500 other students and won the right to move on and compete against students all across the country.

SaskEnergy/TransGas is the official sponsor of the Saskatchewan regional science fair program and further honours the talents of some of these students by awarding them the SaskEnergy/TransGas Special Achievement Award.

These students and their peers are the future of Saskatchewan and, Mr. Speaker, the future of Saskatchewan is as wide open as the bright minds of these very talented young people.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating these budding scientists on their achievement so far, and in wishing them the best of luck in this week's competition in Calgary.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Contract Negotiations with Medical Profession

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. Contract talks between the provincial government and the Saskatchewan doctors have pretty much stalled since the doctors rejected the latest offer from the province last weekend. And the frustration level is such that some doctors in the province are withdrawing their services — Meadow Lake yesterday and Swift Current this afternoon.

However today the Saskatchewan Medical Association has said they've come up with some possible solutions that may address the problem of recruitment and retention of doctors in this province. They say the ideas are unique and they want the provincial government to seriously consider these options as a starting point to any future negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, is the provincial government reviewing these

options? And will the government agree to the SMA's (Saskatchewan Medical Association) request that their ideas for recruitment and retention will be on the table when face-to-face negotiations resume?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the answer is yes and yes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to get a clear answer from this government opposite.

Mr. Speaker, the frustration level of the province's doctors is understandable given that the NDP has ignored issues such as retention and recruitment for these many, many years. The NDP's inaction on what is a well-publicized shortage of physicians, of specialists, and other health care professionals across this province has pushed them to the breaking point. But fortunately our doctors are still willing to negotiate. In fact they are willing to put new and creative ideas on the table so that a settlement can be reached quickly.

Mr. Speaker, the SMA is encouraged by the minister's willingness to restart negotiations as early as tomorrow. However there are no plans in place, there's been no communications, and no agenda set for the negotiations that are supposed to happen tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister communicate to the SMA quickly the agenda for the negotiations, the place and time, so that they can understand that this is indeed going forward?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, conversations are taking place with the SMA on a regular basis and they will continue until we resolve this matter.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Our Future is Wide Open Campaign

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. When the NDP first announced their Future is Wide Open campaign, the budget was \$2 million. But now we find out that the NDP have spent well over \$1 million of those taxpayers' dollars in the last month and this month, Mr. Speaker. In April and May they spent over \$1 million on TV, radio, print advertising in their pre-election campaign — \$1 million in those two months alone.

Mr. Speaker, what is the budget now for the Future is Wide Open campaign, and how many more taxpayers' dollars are the NDP going to spend in their desperation to buy support from Saskatchewan voters?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, there is a song that goes, accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — And many people have been telling the Government of Saskatchewan and chambers of commerce actually for several years that what we need to do in Saskatchewan is to tell the people of Saskatchewan and to tell the people of Canada and the world about all of the great things that are happening in the province of Saskatchewan.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, that's what we're doing. And just referring to a news report on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) on Monday, there was an interview of people about this campaign. The opposition has raised it.

The first Saskatoon resident said, just the imagery, it shows a lot about Saskatchewan; I think it's pretty cool. The second one said, I like the variety — there's youth and some older people and so on; I like that because it gets to the heart of what we really are here. And the third one said, I think they're good; I think any kind of promotion to lift morale in Saskatchewan is wonderful.

And what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is telling people about how wonderful Saskatchewan is. And we invite the opposition to join us, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the minister said that it's about selling Saskatchewan to the people because this campaign is designed supposedly to bring investment and people to this province — which begs the question, Mr. Speaker: why is most of the advertising dollars being spent in Saskatchewan instead of outside Saskatchewan? In April and May alone they spent over 1 million taxpayers' dollars on a pre-election campaign, of which \$600,000 was spent in this province, Mr. Speaker, not outside.

Mr. Speaker, if this campaign is really about attracting people and investments from other provinces and other countries to this province, why is the majority of the taxpayers' dollars being spent in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, anyone who has ever been involved in sales knows that to sell something you have to feel positive about it yourself. And what we have in this Legislative Chamber, Mr. Speaker, is evidence that there are at least some people in the province who are not aware of all of the good things happening in Saskatchewan — people that are not aware of the 12,900 new jobs in the last year, not aware that we have Canada's only synchrotron, not aware of our growing manufacturing sector. Mr. Speaker, there are people right in this Legislative Chamber that are not aware of all of those things. They're all sitting over there.

But what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is following the advice of people like the *Meadow Lake Progress* who says, "Blowing up Saskatchewan's ego — why not?" And that's what we say, Mr. Speaker. Why not be positive for a change?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister is quoting from some newspapers. I'd like to quote from a newspaper — February 24, 1988, and I quote:

Calvert accuses the PC government of spending precious money on advertising programs that should be diverted to job creation and stimulating the economy.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the money is being spent in Saskatchewan, not outside. But there is some, Mr. Speaker, that is being spent outside in Mexico.

This morning a friend of mine gave me a Future is Wide Open pen and he pointed out that it's made by the BIC Corporation in Mexico. I used this pen in preparing this question, Mr. Speaker, which is as follows:

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

It writes in Spanish, Mr. Speaker.

How much money is the NDP spending on its taxpayer-funded pre-election campaign?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, yesterday approximately 326,000 Canadians who read *The Globe and Mail* learned about this great province through *The Globe and Mail* coast to coast. This week I have been handed a copy of the *Maclean's* magazine, the *Maclean's* magazine which features the Cypress Hills Park as one of Canada's great eight escapes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — This week I was handed a copy of a magazine by DaimlerChrysler that features Saskatchewan as its prominent story. And last night my research wing on South Alberta, down here in Regina, tells me — believe it or not — Saskatchewan was featured on *Jeopardy*.

Mr. Speaker, across the nation, across the continent, and across the province people are excited about the future of Saskatchewan.

I say, Mr. Speaker, that compares, that compares with the member, who has stood on his feet today in this House, and said when we initiated this Wide Open Future campaign, this man says, this is snake oil. This is the man who would describe the province of Saskatchewan as snake oil. He should apologize. He should get his leader and his caucus to get on board with the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Closure of McLean Trans-Canada Campground

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Environment. It looks like the NDP has weaved its magic once again. This time the government has driven an entrepreneur from the town of

McLean out of business.

For the past eight years Annette Jardine has operated the McLean Trans-Canada Campground. The campground was leased to Annette by the provincial government and for many years Annette has been trying to buy the campground from the government. But after years of frustration with NDP roadblocks and bureaucratic red tape, Annette finally terminated her lease. Now the campground and Annette's businesses are both closed.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain why the NDP supposed wide open future is driving this person out of business?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, our provincial park system in this province is one of the greatest treasures this province has ever had, Mr. Speaker. And we will continue investing in that positive development of this great Saskatchewan.

But what I will say is this, Mr. Speaker. I'll say this. For the past eight years we have been working with a number of lessees including the Jardines, and we have told them we will work very closely with you. And we have worked very closely with them over the last eight years, Mr. Speaker. And this party has done a wonderful job. They've generated revenues of over 50,000 or approximately 50,000 per year as a result of the McLean lake site.

Today now I can say, Mr. Speaker, this government has worked with them and each year we have charged them just over \$500, over the last five years, to use that particular site to try and help develop a tourism opportunity and to help build up the economy, and to up entrepreneurial spirit of this province — \$500 over the past five years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — That non-answer from the minister tells the people of Saskatchewan two things: that the NDP wallet may be wide open for multi-million dollar investments in Atlanta and in Nashville but it sure isn't open for business right here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. In NDP Saskatchewan the door for small business is slammed shut by that minister.

Mr. Speaker, Annette Jardine says she has been working for four . . . for years to buy the McLean campground but the NDP has refused to make any regulatory changes to make this sale possible, Mr. Speaker, and the NDP has refused to give Annette a final price on the campground land. So now Annette Jardine has thrown in the towel and shut the campground business for the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP drive Annette Jardine out of business and close the McLean Trans-Canada Campground?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Once again I will point out, in 2001 we sent a lease bill of \$560 to use 130 acres and a number of facilities at McLean lake. This was intended to make sure that the lessee continued appreciating the fact that we had a good

opportunity here and that we're prepared to work with this particular business, Mr. Speaker.

And what I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, when that party across the way criticizes some of the efforts we're trying to undertake to promote a good park system in this province, they have to also understand that we're trying to drive up the entrepreneurial spirit as well.

Now what happens now, when the Crown Investments Corporation wants to sit down and talk to the member from the Battleford-Cut Knife and says, hey let's develop a tourism opportunity by having this spa, and what does that member of the opposition say? The Saskatchewan Party, the Leader of the Opposition says no. No investment. No investment whatsoever.

So if you want to stand up here and talk about no investment in the tourism opportunity, well we'll take you on, on your record, any day over our record on this side, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, what this minister doesn't understand is his decisions or non-decisions to sell this campground affect many more businesses in the area.

The owner of the bar and restaurant in McLean says his business relies on people that stay in this campground. Ron McMillan says that the closure of Annette Jardine's campground business may cause him to close his own business in McLean because of lack of business. Another local business owner, Angie Singbeil, also says that the closure of the campground will hurt her gas station.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has driven Annette Jardine out of business with government red tape and bureaucratic roadblocks. Now another two businesses are worried about their own survival in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because of decisions or lack of decisions by that minister, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister reopen that file and look at selling that property to people that are looking at buying it?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, this government is very proud of their investment into the provincial parks system. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I can go through a list of some of the improvements that we've made, but I won't do this because I want to make a message pointing to the business people that man . . . that member makes reference to.

The Saskatchewan Party is spreading doom and gloom, Mr. Speaker, and I want to tell mister gloom himself this. Number one is that we are very proud of some of the entrepreneurial spirit of this province; we are very proud of our parks. We'll continue trying to marry the two and there's some good successful stories out there to be told, Mr. Speaker.

Now in reference to the two business communities that he has mentioned, is we are going to readvertise in the hopes that we can reopen that park and see if we can find another lessee. In fact, Mr. Speaker, we've advertised for the past three and a half

weeks, and sometimes in April, and we never had no interest whatsoever.

We're working with the RM (rural municipality), with the town to try and see if there's interest there, Mr. Speaker, and we haven't got no interest expressed whatsoever.

But that has not deterred us, Mr. Speaker. We're going to readvertise, we're going to re-examine, and we hope to reopen that thing very soon.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier this week I asked the minister what he was doing to deal with the dispute between the First Nations and the federal government that could result in water levels on the lakes in the Qu'Appelle River chain to decline by more than a metre or more, Mr. Speaker, which would be devastating to the local economies of dozens of communities. And his answer was, I think we sent a couple of letters, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP seems to be more busy . . . more worried about buying \$75 a dozen golf balls than it does about the economic futures of towns like Fort Qu'Appelle, Lebret, and B-Say-Tah.

And today, Mr. Speaker, we get the same response about the McLean campground. It's quite interesting, they sent out a news release today: 2003 officially opens the Saskatchewan provincial parks — unless you happen to be in McLean, Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this minister is continuing to devastate small businesses around this province. What will he do to guarantee that McLean campground will open for people that want to use it this summer?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, for the last four years, we have worked with the regional park system and put \$2 million to help work with the Regional Parks Association, Mr. Speaker. We have continually improved the improvements or seen improvements throughout our provincial park system overall.

And I would say something, Mr. Speaker, to captain gloom over there and his leader, doctor doom. That's the reason why the Saskatchewan people will never support the Saskatchewan Party because they're all negative and they whine and they moan with no solutions.

And I'll say again today, Mr. Speaker, that each year we have . . . This past 2001 we've got \$530 in lease fees in reference to the lease at the McLean rec site. And we know the challenge of some of the small entrepreneurs in trying to make it happen and make it work.

And I will point this out, Mr. Speaker — we'll continue respecting the small entrepreneurs, we will readvertise for a lease, and we'll work with the business community in that area to try and mitigate this particular challenge when it comes to the rec site in question.

Freedom of Information Request Regarding Mega Bingo

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP cover-up of \$8 million mega bingo scandal continues. CBC Radio recently requested a freedom of information request asking for documentation related to the mega bingo project and the tendering of the work. The NDP government has now responded, saying it will take 562 hours to compile this information and they want \$18,000 for their efforts.

Mr. Speaker, this is absolutely ridiculous. Will the minister order his officials to waive this ridiculous charge and turn over the information requested under the freedom of information Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, it's evident, and it's becoming more evident to the people of this province, those folks over there have no idea what goes on. And they could care less, they could care less because, Mr. Speaker, SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) frequently and regularly processes freedom of information requests.

All the requests are handled in accordance with The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act — for the member from Weyburn; I want her to hear this. The Act allows government organizations to charge for the cost of preparing and reviewing records and for photocopying requested records. Mr. Speaker, these costs are all laid out by the Act — \$15 per half hour of time, the first two hours are at no cost.

I hear the Leader of the Opposition hollering, cover-up. Well let me just say to that member, Mr. Speaker, that strong and bitter words indicate a weak cause. And that's all they have over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, if the NDP, if the NDP had spent 562 hours looking at the mega bingo project before they went into it, they probably would have not lost 8 million taxpayers' dollars.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — I can't understand why it would take 562 hours to compile the information on mega bingo when the NDP spent exactly zero hours writing a business plan and zero hours getting cabinet approval.

Mr. Speaker, this government spent 8 million taxpayers' dollars without a business plan, without cabinet approval, without due diligence, that now the people of Saskatchewan want answers. But what does the NDP do? They cover up. Mr. Speaker, what is the NDP trying to hide?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this self-righteous indignation is frightening, Mr. Speaker, coming from those members.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority bases its time estimate on the number of pages involved in the request, including the time to search records, read records, and sever protected information. This doesn't happen just overnight. Obviously they have no idea of what doing research is all about.

They don't do any research, Mr. Speaker. They come in here with fabricated stories and embellished comments about people on government and our civil servants and continue to attack them about hiding things. Nothing's hidden, Mr. Speaker. All their questions are answered through their questions that they present in this House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, 8 million taxpayers' dollars have been lost on the NDP's botched bingo scheme. That money could have been used for a lot better purposes like maybe settling the doctors' dispute in Saskatchewan.

The people of Saskatchewan have been demanding answers about the bingo scandal for almost two months, Mr. Speaker. The NDP spent zero time on a business plan. They spent zero time on cabinet approval. The pattern of this government is alarming — cover up, no answers, and no accountability. Mr. Speaker, to the minister, what is your government hiding and who are you trying to protect?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, if the opposition is so adamant about obtaining that information, they can certainly advance the \$18,000 to SLGA.

This is an operation that was underway for a year and a half. It was implemented over a four-year period, Mr. Speaker. There are all kinds of records and documentations and board reports and on and on. And they are available. But it takes time for people to sit down, review, and as I mentioned, sever anything that needs to be protected under the protection of privacy Act.

Mr. Speaker, the one thing that I know for sure, if those . . . if the Saskatchewan Party was ever in power, you'd never get any information from anybody because they'd privatize those folks and they wouldn't be able to . . . you . . . nobody would be able to access anything.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the Premier of Saskatchewan told the people of Saskatchewan, after the minister responsible for SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company) told the people that he had misled them for 6 years, the Premier said, and I quote:

If and when mistakes are made the public is deserving of both explanation and accounting.

He further went on to say in the same statement:

The government has learned from decisions . . . (made) six

years ago.

This was on February 17, Mr. Speaker, of this year. Well, Mr. Speaker, it appears that the Premier's commitment of open and accountability was short-lived. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, will he today release all requested information? Will he come clean on the mega bingo scandal?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, once again, if those members wish to obtain that information, the cost has been costed out. Mr. Speaker, it's there, nobody's covering anything up. They don't appreciate or even consider the amount of time it would take to go over the number of suppliers the year and a half it was in business, the four-year implementation program, Mr. Speaker, requests, electronic records, and on and on.

Mr. Speaker, all freedom of information requests are handled the same way whether they come from the public, members of the media, or from the opposition. No one is treated any differently, Mr. Speaker. And we're happy to supply any of that information through the freedom of information, and anybody that's not happy with the responses, they have the option to appeal to the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day I'd like to ask leave of the Assembly to introduce a number of routine motions.

Leave granted.

MOTIONS

Referral of Annual Report to the Standing Committee on Communication

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the report of the Saskatchewan Legislative Library as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Communication.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

Referral of Retention and Disposal Schedules to the Standing Committee on Communication

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move as well, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the retention and disposal schedules approved under The Archives Act by the Public Documents Committee as tabled in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Communication.

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

Motion agreed to.

**Referral of Public Accounts to the
Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move as well, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That the Public Accounts of the province of Saskatchewan as tabled intersessionally and in the present session be referred to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

**Referral of Bylaws of Professional Associations to the
Special Committee on Regulations**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move as well that the bylaws of the . . . seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North again:

That the bylaws of the professional associations and amendments thereto as tabled in the present session be referred to the Special Committee on Regulations.

Motion agreed to.

**Estimates and Supplementary Estimates Referred to the
Standing Committee on Estimates**

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I move, and I know the member from Moose Jaw North will as well like to second this motion:

That the estimates for the Legislative Assembly, vote 21; the Provincial Auditor, vote 28; the Chief Electoral Officer, vote 34; the Information and Privacy Commissioner, vote 55; the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, vote 56; the Conflict of Interest Commissioner, vote 57; as well as the supplementary estimates for the Information and Privacy Commissioner, vote 55, be withdrawn from the Committee of Finance and referred to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased this afternoon to stand on behalf of the government and convert questions 257 to 264 inclusive to debates returnable.

The Speaker: — 257 . . . Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the Government Whip to repeat the numbers, please. Repeat.

Mr. Yates: — Mr. Speaker, we'll convert for debates returnable no. 257 through 264 inclusive.

The Speaker: — 257 to 264 inclusive converted.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to provide answers to written questions no. 265 and 266.

The Speaker: — Responses to 265, 266 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 28 — The Health Information Protection
Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today to move second reading of The Health Information Protection Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, the protection of personal health information is important to every citizen in this province. Personal privacy is something we all expect from the health care system.

However, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan people also want their health care providers to have all of the information they need to make the best possible decisions with respect to patient care. Mr. Speaker, people give their personal health information to health care providers because they trust those providers to keep that information private and to use it only when appropriate.

Mr. Speaker, there's a growing need for more and more personal health information in the health care system today. The volume of individual's health information increases as we have access to more tests and treatments, and so does the demand on the health care system continue to more effectively exchange information.

Improved communication between health care providers allows for faster diagnosis and more effective treatment. As technology improves, our ability to share health information increases. Therefore it is all the more important that we must ensure that individual patient privacy is protected.

That is why, Mr. Speaker, we introduced The Health Information Protection Act in 1999. This Act sets the ground rules for protecting personal health information. It is designed to safeguard the privacy of people's health information while ensuring that health care providers are able to share information as needed in order to give the highest quality health care.

Since the introduction of The Health Information Protection Act in 1999, we have worked closely with our partners in the health care system in extensive consultations on the Act. Our goal has been to achieve the right balance between the need for personal privacy and the need for timely, accessible health information to be used by our health care professionals.

During the extensive consultations since 1999, our health care partners identified certain issues. They felt that health care professionals might not be able to easily access, use, and share important information during the treatment of their patients.

Last winter, the winter of 2001-2002, a formal consultation document on the amendments was distributed to the Saskatchewan Health Information Network, the Saskatchewan

Medical Association, the regional health authorities' chief executive officers and the Chairs of their boards, the health professional regulatory bodies, the Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations and its affiliates, deputy ministers of government departments, other government institutions, unions, as well as other stakeholders and people across the province.

We heard and acknowledged their comments, Mr. Speaker, and decided that the best course of action was to amend The Health Information Protection Act. The result is the Bill before you today.

We resolved the issues that would clarify and strengthen the Act while being true to its original intent. Mr. Speaker, we will now have a strong piece of legislation to effectively support the delivery of quality health care services for people across Saskatchewan while maintaining the right to privacy and the protection of personal health information. We are adding protection for personal health information and we are ensuring that strong, consistent rules are in place throughout the health care system for that information.

With these amendments, The Health Information Protection Act will require health care providers and others entrusted with personal health information to collect, use, and disclose personal health information only as necessary and in accordance with strict policy and procedures consistent with the Act to protect the integrity and accuracy and confidentiality of personal health information, and to provide security for personal health information, and to have policies and procedures in place about retention and destruction of personal health information.

And, Mr. Speaker, in the event that a comprehensive electronic health record is created, The Health Information Protection Amendment Act ensures that patients will have the power to block access to their personal health information once that system is in place.

Organizations that contract with others for information management services for personal health information must enter into binding legal agreements to ensure that health information is kept secure and private. Current levels of information protection are being maintained or strengthened. Health care professionals will have access to the information they need to provide the best possible services.

(14:30)

Failure to live up to the Act's requirements could result in stiff penalties, including imprisonment and fines up to \$50,000 for an individual or \$500,000 for a corporation.

Patients will be better informed about the use of their personal health information and will have more confidence in the integrity of the system. They can bring their concerns regarding personal health information to the attention of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

This amended Act, Mr. Speaker, provides Saskatchewan with an excellent privacy framework which will enhance and improve the confidentiality surrounding personal health information in Saskatchewan.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Health Information Protection Amendment Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to respond to the second reading of The Health Information Protection Amendment Act, Bill No. 28.

Mr. Speaker, as I was listening to the minister talk about this Bill and the importance of the Bill, I couldn't help but thinking of how vulnerable all of us are when we put all that information in the hands of certain people. I think, Mr. Speaker, that we just take it for granted maybe sometimes that that information is secure, that only the people that are supposed to see it will see it, Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately that maybe hasn't always been the case and that's the need for some amendments to this Bill.

There have been situations, I think, in the past . . . And I know I have dealt with in my own constituency, issues dealing with health information. And it's personal information. You want it to be confidential.

I've dealt with it through a couple of different ways. I had one person that contacted my constituency and the doctor was no longer around and he had no access. He couldn't access his health information. I mean it was so, I guess, tight that he couldn't get the information that the doctor had had, had no — I guess he hadn't been to the doctor for a long time — had no record of where the doctor went. And it was maybe on the flip side of what this Bill is talking about. But often, Mr. Speaker, we tend to take for granted where that information goes and who has accessibility to that information, Mr. Speaker.

And I think this certainly is timely in the events of what has happened over the last month or so with some information — health information — from a doctor here in Regina that didn't dispose of the information correctly, Mr. Speaker. And that really brings to light the possibility for all of us of what could happen, Mr. Speaker.

So I'm certainly glad that these amendments are going to protect the information, health information, because as I said, it's personal information that I don't think any one of us . . . regardless of how clean of a health record we have or whether we've had health problems, should fall into hands of people that don't deserve to see those records, Mr. Speaker.

So at this time there are . . . this is a very major issue as far as health information. There are a number of players that we would like to consult with. The minister talked of the number of people, organizations that they have dealt with regarding this Bill.

But there are other organizations and just private people, individuals that I know myself would like to pass this Bill by and see if it would meet with their requirements, if they would feel comfortable with this legislation covering this very, very important piece of legislation regarding health information, Mr. Speaker.

So until we're able to consult with those parties, Mr. Speaker, I

move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 23 — The Cities Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Cities Amendment Act, 2003. The Cities Act provides a legislative framework through which Saskatchewan cities exercise their powers and provide services.

In the spring of 2002 legislative session, government passed Bill 75, The Cities Act — new legislation for Saskatchewan cities, Mr. Speaker. This Act was subsequently proclaimed to come into force January 1, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, all Saskatchewan cities, with the exception of Lloydminster which operates under a separate charter, passed resolutions to come under jurisdiction of the new Act on January 1, 2003.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of The Cities Amendment Act. These amendments are a result of the ongoing consultation with the cities as The Cities Act is being implemented, and will serve to strengthen the legislation.

I am pleased, truly pleased that our respective officials have been able to continue to work together to refine the provisions of The Cities Act. Jointly, Mr. Speaker, we've been able to lay the legislative foundation necessary to increase the autonomy of municipalities and to reflect the principles advocated by the cities while meeting the objectives of the province.

Mr. Speaker, the province is very much committed to increasing municipal autonomy and reducing provincial involvement in governance of our cities where there is no overriding provincial interest. We recognize that Saskatchewan city governments are in the best position to make local decisions for the benefit of all of the residents. The Cities Act, Mr. Speaker, is a further extension and recognition of this commitment.

The Act modernizes the relationship between the province and the cities. It enables city governments to encourage initiatives and creativity, and provides citizens with better, more accountable local government.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, the Act introduced the principles of natural person powers and areas of jurisdiction into the municipal legislative landscape while at the same time incorporating the important elements of our current urban legislation.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments in the Bill have been requested by the cities, as is almost always the case with a new Act. As the city administration has set about implementing the new provisions, various issues, questions, and gaps have arisen. This Bill seeks to solve those problems, Mr. Speaker, and in the process both speed up and enhance the implementation of this Act.

The amendments include changes to the definition of control corporation, newspaper, street, and capital property, and a new definition for assessor. Also includes additions to the list of

matters which cannot be delegated by councils to include limiting or prohibiting a business or class of business and exempting property from taxes; clarification regarding the point at which public notice is to be given in relation to when a council considers certain bylaws and matters; and the consolidation of most of the requirements for public notice into one section of the Act.

It also gives clarification of wording in provisions relating to petition requirements, injunctions, and collection of service fees to remove potential conflicts with other provisions of the Act regarding these matters, and to restore wording from The Urban Municipality Act, 1984 and the applicability of The Local Government Election Act regarding votes on questions put to the electors.

And finally, new provisions regarding vacancies on council, changes to council members' public disclosure statement, the disposition of city land and buildings, unclaimed property, and special assessments, consistent with similar provisions in the other municipal Acts.

A second group of amendments relate primarily to assessment provisions and include wording changes and corrections to ensure consistency between The Cities Act and other municipal Acts. In addition these amendments change the period over which property tax change due to reassessment may be phased in to four years. This change ensures that a phase-in process will not extend beyond a single reassessment cycle.

Another amendment ensures that notification of property sales by owners and vendors is provided in accordance with the sales verification form being developed by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency. The amendment related to sales verification form ensures that the form developed by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) is used to notify assessors and the agency when property is sold.

Sales verification forms will be used by SAMA and other assessing authorities to collect data on selected property sales transactions throughout the province. This data, Mr. Speaker, will assist in keeping the assessment system up to date and will enable SAMA to do a more effective job in determining which sales should be used for the calculation of the market adjustment factors.

Mr. Speaker, as part of working in partnership with our stakeholders, department officials have undertaken extensive consultation with the cities to both identify the provisions that needed amending and to develop suitable alternatives. Through this process and during the review of drafts of the Bill, a number of additional needed amendments were brought forward by the cities. Mr. Speaker, other consultations included the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, legal counsel, and other relevant groups such as SAMA.

The direct consultation have proven to be a good basis for establishing consensus on policy direction and the wording of amendments.

These amendments, Mr. Speaker, continue to strengthen the authority and flexibility of city government, further the process to ensure that cities are more accountable to the residents and

taxpayers as opposed to being held accountable to the provincial government.

Our cities, Mr. Speaker, have a great deal to offer in terms of social, cultural, and economic development in this great province of Saskatchewan. We have listened to the city officials' requests to modernize the legislation they are governed by.

And accordingly, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 23, The Cities Amendment Act, 2003.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is an amendment to an Act that was first brought forward last year and there are considerable new pieces to this piece of legislation — lots of amendments, lots of corrections, lots of changes, Mr. Speaker.

You would almost think that The Cities Act was struck as a brand new piece of legislation dealing with something that we knew nothing about and we were just sort of feeling our way in the dark and trying to develop a new program.

But, Mr. Speaker, we've had cities in this province for the last 100 years, and they have been governed, Mr. Speaker. There was a governance form for them. There was a system in place. And surely the transfer should have been made relatively easily from the system in place prior to The Cities Act, such that it wouldn't need this amount of correction the very first year after.

Things change over time and certainly that's acceptable. And as things change, then you need to adjust the rules and regulations under which an entity operates because the circumstances have changed. But in this particular case, the Bill's only a year old and yet this is one of the major pieces of legislation being brought forward by this government in this session, and it's corrections, Mr. Speaker, on mistakes and errors and omissions that they made last year.

Mr. Speaker, the minister was talking about sales identification forms and that these forms would be sent to SAMA so that the tax forms could be set out properly, the assessments could be made formally, properly to the new owner.

He might also consider sending it to ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) because they seem to have a great deal of difficulty in tracking the sales of pieces of property in this province. They can't get the names right, they can't get the numbers right, they just . . . It's just a mess, Mr. Speaker.

So I would suggest to the minister that he also include sending the information to ISC that there's a new owner on this piece of property and here's what it was sold for, Mr. Speaker. And they have to be especially careful, especially careful, that they get the name right on it, Mr. Speaker, because ISC can't figure it out if they don't have the name right.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, there's a couple of other little items here that I noticed in this Bill in listening to the minister and that is going

to need some explanation to it. They're changing one of the requirements from 30 days to 21.

And I note that this government takes a long time in providing services and answers. The fact is one of the questions that was asked was going to take 560-some hours, roughly 90 days, to provide an answer. And yet they're cutting down the time requirements on this particular piece of legislation.

Now I don't know exactly what it's about because this is a new piece of legislation and we need time to look into this. But in reducing that time I wonder as to the reasons for it, Mr. Speaker.

In clause no. 50, they talk about no tax phase-in plan established pursuant to subsection 1 is to be extended. And you need to take a look at this, Mr. Speaker, as to what is this piece of legislation going to do.

There are circumstances within the cities where they provide tax exemptions to get a certain area developed, Mr. Speaker, because they want industry in a particular area. They want to develop residential properties in a certain area and they provide some tax incentives to do that, some exemptions, Mr. Speaker. So you need to be careful in making these kind of changes as to what kind of a long-term impact is it going to have on a city's urban development projects and their plan.

In another clause it talks about a peace officer or designated officer may destroy any animal that he or she finds injured. And that reminded me of a case that took place in the US here a few weeks ago where there was an injured dog and the police officer came along and shot the dog, Mr. Speaker, that was supposedly injured, threw it in a deep freeze for two hours, and when they opened up the deep freeze the dog was still alive and is still alive today, Mr. Speaker.

So when officers do find those kind of circumstances, they need to make sure that the animal is actually injured in the first place and that, if they do proceed to destroy the animal, that they do it in a humane and quick manner, Mr. Speaker, that actually works. In this particular case it didn't work and I can say that it was considerable embarrassment to the police agency that was involved. And considerable chagrin to the owner of the dog, Mr. Speaker.

Then we get down to the last page of this particular Bill, and I think there must be something subversive going on here, Mr. Speaker, because it's certainly not clear actually what is being done. Because it says, under clause 69:

in clause (d) by striking out "city" and substituting "city,";

In clause (b) it says:

in clause (f) by striking out "The Cities Act" and substituting "The Cities Act,"; . . .

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not exactly sure what the minister is doing here. He's taking out one word and putting the exact same word back into the clause again.

So I'm not sure how many hours it took the minister or his staff to figure this out but maybe they should have spent some of that time providing the answers to the questions we were asking today. Mr. Speaker, that would have been much more productive than changing the word city to the word city; or the word The Cities Act to The Cities Act. And that's not the only clause where they're doing this, Mr. Speaker.

So I think the minister has a lot of answering to do, and we need to take a very serious look and talk to the stakeholders about this particular Act. We need to talk to the city people of Regina, Saskatoon, and all of the other cities in Saskatchewan to determine exactly what the minister is doing here and what kind of an impact it's going to have on the citizens and the jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, of our cities.

So I move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 24 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again to move the second reading of The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, The Northern Municipalities Act provides a legislative framework through which northern municipalities exercise their powers and provide services. The amendments presented today, Mr. Speaker, concern property assessment matters and include provision for a simplified assessment appeal process for taxpayers, as introduced in The Cities Act.

These amendments are being introduced in order to keep Northern Municipalities Act provisions consistent with those in other municipal Acts.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment related to the sales verification form ensures that the form developed by SAMA is used to notify assessors and the agency when property is sold and, upon the request for such information by SAMA or where a northern municipality undertakes its own valuations and revaluations, the municipalities' assessor.

The sales verification form will be used by SAMA to collect data on property sales transactions in the province. This data, Mr. Speaker, will assist in keeping the assessment system up to date, and will enable SAMA to do a more effective job in determining which sales should be used for the calculation of market adjustment factors.

Mr. Speaker, The Cities Act includes a simplified appeal process that appellants may choose for property assessments. Provisions have been added to introduce this mechanism in all of our municipal Acts.

Some property owners may choose to opt for the simplified process because they feel that the regular appeal process is too onerous. The simplified process provides for a one-person appeal board appointed from the members of a board of revision, and at the appellant's option may be used for all single-family residential properties, regardless of assessed

value, and any property with an assessed value under \$250,000.

An appellant, if not satisfied with the decision of the one-person board, would still have the right to further appeal to the Saskatchewan Municipal Board.

Mr. Speaker, the maximum phase-in period over which changes in property taxes resulting from a revaluation may be phased in will be amended to match the four-year assessment cycle.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, municipalities that use phase-in are implementing tax increases or decreases over a three- or four-year period. No municipalities will be impacted as a result of changing the phase-in time to four years.

Mr. Speaker, consultations on the 2003 proposed amendments were carried out by Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, and involved sharing drafting instructions with Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities, and the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account Management Board.

This, Mr. Speaker, afforded each organization the opportunity to analyze the proposed amendments in greater detail. The direct consultations have proven to be a good way of developing consensus on policy, policy direction and the wording of amendments. So, Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 24, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, some of the changes that are taking place in The Northern Municipalities Act are some of the same changes that are taking place in The Cities Act as well. And the sales verification form is one of those items that is likely in all four of the municipal Bills that are coming forward.

And I think the criticisms that I applied in The Cities Act that ISC, the land titles project, should be notified as well so that they can get the names right, they can get the values right, they can get the property description down properly should be sent to them as well as to SAMA because we've already noted the difficulties that ISC has in running the province's land title system.

It takes a horrendous amount of time at a horrendous cost to do the land titles work that was done so simply before, Mr. Speaker. And so any additional information that ISC can possibly gain will be of benefit to them and could only — to use the word enhance is maybe a little strong for ISC — would certainly benefit them in providing some service to the people of Saskatchewan.

I'm concerned though about the change that the minister is proposing on the phase-in for tax exemptions, Mr. Speaker, because I don't know exactly what has happened across the North on this particular issue, but I do know that in the city of Regina they have a tax regime in place that allows for a five-year phase-in of the property taxes on certain developments. And if the minister is changing this to only provide a four-year exemption, that means that the city of Regina is going to have to change some of its policies as to the development of some of the residential areas and perhaps some

of the industrial areas of the province, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on this particular Bill at this time.

First, RMs (rural municipality) that choose to set weight limits and/or designate truck routes using this new authority will be required to ensure that their local transportation policies are harmonized with those that might be established in adjacent municipalities.

The Speaker: — I just would like to clarify for all members that the second reading speech that was given by the Minister of Government Relations was for Bill 24, and the motion was for Bill 24, item 2. And the motion now is by the member for Cannington that we adjourn debate on Bill 24.

Second, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in recognition that occasionally despite everyone's best intentions and efforts, disputes can occur. We have included a mechanism whereby municipalities and road users can resolve their differences in a timely and cost-effective manner. In doing so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our intention is to ensure consistency in the application of local transportation policies at the local level.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 40 — The Rural Municipality
Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to move second reading of The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, providing this new authority to rural municipalities will improve councils' ability to manage truck traffic, protect municipal roads, develop local economies, and provide an effective and efficient means by which goods and other products produced in our rural areas can be transported to markets around the world.

Mr. Speaker, similar to The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2003, this Act is being amended to increase local decision-making authority, provide further clarity for certain terms, and create greater consistency between the municipal Acts.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in response to a request by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the amendments also clarify some wording in the provisions that set out the framework for rural municipalities to provide firefighting services.

For example, Mr. Speaker, amendments proposed in this Bill change the time period for property tax phase-in from six to four years. The new time period coincides with the period of time between re-evaluations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I said, with The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, passage of this Bill will continue the process of providing municipalities with greater independence to manage their own affairs and will broaden the scope of local authority and decision-making capacity. It will enhance the ability of rural municipalities, in partnership with the province, to help grow and serve our provincial economy for future generations.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the sales verification form being developed by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency, or SAMA, will be used as with the urban municipalities to ensure that the data provided for property assessment purposes by owners and vendors of property is consistent.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 40, The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, a significant addition to the Bill will change when the term of office for rural council members commences. With this change, Mr. Speaker, council members' term of office will now begin at the first meeting following his or her election, rather than January 1. This amendment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was requested by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities and will make this aspect of the term of office provisions in the Act consistent with those in other municipal legislation.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in recent years our government has introduced amendments to the municipal Acts that have increased municipal autonomy in a number of areas, subject to the protection of public or provincial interests where necessary. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to say this Bill is consistent with this approach. This Bill will provide a new discretionary authority for rural municipalities to determine weight limits and to designate truck routes on municipal roads. Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you will know, there is a clear public interest in ensuring the free flow of vehicles, goods, and other commodities throughout our great province. Development of our resource-based and agricultural economy very definitely depends on this. This new authority is balanced by two important limitations.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to respond to the second reading remarks of the Bill No. 40, The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, Mr. Speaker.

And the Act talks about local decision making by giving municipalities in rural Saskatchewan a better opportunity to make decisions that impact their own municipalities.

And it's interesting that this Bill is coming forward at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because certainly I remember one of the first major debates that I was in after being elected, and it started just prior to the 1999 election, was the whole issue about amalgamating municipalities. And forced amalgamation I think was the term that was used over and over again by municipalities, whether it was SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) or SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) who were talking about it. I know in my area there were a number of tax-revolt meetings held over and over again in different municipalities.

But it was interesting, one of the concerns were that the provincial government seems to think that we should all be amalgamated into one huge RM or county, whatever you may say, but then on the other hand they didn't want to give us the powers to make our decisions that we felt needed to be made.

And this Bill looks like it's talking about giving more power, autonomy, back to rural municipalities which is exactly what that whole debate was about three years ago.

Unfortunately, or perhaps I should say fortunately, that the municipalities along with the opposition, the Saskatchewan Party, won the day and the government backed away from that whole legislation, Mr. Speaker.

It talks about some other things such as the property tax phase in from six years to four years. It talks about SAMA.

And it's interesting, I remember a number of years ago, it had been years since we had any sort of assessment on property, and it's been coming forward a little more recently — it looks like it's going to be even more recently — but it's extremely important that the assessments on property tax are correct.

And when you go five and eight and ten years in between assessments, it throws things out of perspective and out of proportion. And if there's one thing that should be in proper perspective and proportion, it's the assessment on land because this government piles so much weight on the property taxpayers of this province, where there is municipal tax but more importantly the education tax of property.

I would be very surprised if, and perhaps the members opposite being only city MLAs, if they went to any rural constituency and talked on . . . knocked on doors in the country or in town, and I know even myself in the city here, one of the major, major issues is the education portion of property tax that they have to pay. It truly is an issue. And if you talk to some people that own acres and acres and acres, sections of land, and if you only realize the amount of education that they put on property . . . that they pay each year on property tax, Mr. Speaker, it would be astonishing.

The reason I bring that up is they're finally talking about SAMA and assessment and how important assessment is, Mr. Speaker. And when you leave it 10 years between assessments and then keep piling on the education funding on property tax, it really puts things out of perspective.

Mind you being out of perspective is really not that big of an issue I guess to this government, Mr. Speaker, because I had heard the Minister of Education talk about a mill rate and a 2 mill rate increase as being slight or minute. Can you believe that? The Minister of Education not knowing the impact of a mill rate in this province. She didn't have a clue what a mill rate . . . I don't really know if it has much impact out there in rural Saskatchewan. Well I would ask that minister to get out into rural Saskatchewan and see what a mill rate means and how much it costs certain farmers in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill talks about a number of other things as well, such as weight limits and designating road . . . designated truck routes for municipal roads — things like that. And, Mr.

Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, again what this Bill talks about is putting more power in the hands of the councillors and the reeves of municipalities throughout this province.

I think if anybody would know which roads are in shape and which roads aren't, it sure is the government opposite, Mr. Speaker. It would be the councillors and reeves of RMs throughout this province that would know best as to that. So the Bill talks about designating some of the authority to local municipalities, rural municipalities, and I think that's probably a good idea.

It also talks about timely and cost-effective manner of — now let me just read here; disputes can occur, things like that — so what it talks about is the local transportation authority and resolving disputes. Whereas before, it used to go into the government's hands and they would hang onto it and hang onto it and this seems to be much more timely and cost effective, Mr. Speaker. And that would be a good thing.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to see that the government is looking at finally giving up some of its powers and turning it over to the municipalities that know best in their own area.

But, Mr. Speaker, in closing, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the minister of Education to at least understand what a mill rate means in Saskatchewan and the impact it would have before she stands in the House and talks about how minute a 2 mill increase would be in this province, Mr. Speaker.

So with that, I would move to adjourn Bill No. 40, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 41 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2003.

This Act, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is being amended to provide greater flexibility for urban municipalities to deal with governance issues. The amendments also deal with some property assessment matters and include provisions for a simplified appeal process as introduced last spring in The Cities Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, now that The Cities Act is in force and all cities have migrated to the new Act, we are proposing amendments that will remove references to city and cities from The Urban Municipality Act, plus remove provisions that exclusively pertained to cities. Additional amendments will repeal a number of unproclaimed provisions from previous urban municipal Act amending Bills that are no longer relevant.

If I may, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to take a moment to provide a bit of the detail about some of the more significant amendments proposed in this Bill. As I mentioned, this Bill will provide urban municipalities with greater flexibility to deal with governance issues. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, our coalition government is firmly on record as supporting the

efforts of local councils towards voluntary, municipal restructuring.

A number of the amendments in this Bill are expressly intended to enable councils to better address local circumstances or to facilitate restructuring proposals that require more flexibility in council sizes and configuration and electoral representation. For example, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these amendments will provide the opportunity to adopt a more flexible ward system in a restructured municipality, achieved by giving municipal wards commissions the authority to design a variety of scenarios including multi-sector wards and even a combination ward and at-large systems. Mr. Deputy Speaker, these provisions will also ensure that wards commissions continue to conduct public hearings and consultations as part of the process of determining the most appropriate scenario.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the amendments relating to property assessment include provisions for a simplified appeal process. In addition, the amendments will reduce the period of time for phasing in changes resulting from . . . resulting, pardon me, from revaluations of property taxes from six to four years to match the four-year reassessment cycle. Amendments will also ensure that notification of property sales by owners and vendors will be provided in accordance with the sales verification form being developed by the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency.

The amendments proposed in this Bill will provide municipalities with greater flexibility to deal with local issues, enhance decision-making processes, and align administrative processes. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 41, The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, the urban municipal Act was the Act that the cities used to operate under and now they have their own Act that was brought in last year and is being amended again this year with the corrections.

One of the issues that the minister raised was the possibilities of towns and villages going to the ward system. And I think that's an area that's going to have to be looked at very carefully, Mr. Speaker. I think there's going to need to be some discussion with the towns and villages with SUMA, their towns and villages directorates, to determine which direction they want to go, whether they're in favour of it.

You know, a lot of these towns and villages, Mr. Speaker, are quite small and if you were to have a ward system in place you could maybe have a block or two within the ward. And an at-large system, Mr. Speaker, where the members of council — and a lot of these councils are four, five, six people only, Mr. Speaker — represent the entire community . . . They know everybody by their first name, Mr. Speaker, and an at-large system makes a lot of sense in those circumstances. And I'm not sure if there are many communities, Mr. Speaker — there may be some — but I'm sure that there are very many communities where a ward system would be appropriate.

(15:15)

So I think it's going to be very important to talk to the people involved in the leadership of the smaller urbans, Mr. Speaker, to determine whether or not they're actually interested in a ward system, and being forced to go to a ward system, just what would that mean to those communities.

So I think that's going to be an important role that needs to be played and the opposition will do that, Mr. Speaker.

As well there are some changes being made to the approvals that are necessary by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board. And when it talks, Mr. Speaker, the Bill talks of changes to rates, I'm wondering as well if that applies to the mill rate that is applied to the assessment of each of the communities. Are those mill rates going to have to be approved by the Saskatchewan Municipal Board before they can be put in place to budget for that particular village, town, Mr. Speaker?

Those are some of the kinds of things that really slow up the budgetary process if you have to go forward and seek approval every time you wish to make a minute change in, say, your water rate, Mr. Speaker. Those are some of the things that just add a lot of bureaucracy and really provide little or no service and little or no protection to the taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, and yet drive up the cost of their administration. And most of these communities, Mr. Speaker . . . Deputy Speaker, have a very, very low budget. They don't have a lot of money to waste on building bureaucracies.

As well, Mr. Speaker, there is the consolidation of long-term debt. Now municipalities are not supposed to have debt. They can have securities, Mr. Speaker. They can have . . . They can issue bonds which, in reality, are debt. But most municipalities do not look at the servicing of those particular financial instruments as being a debt vehicle such as going and borrowing money from the bank.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues here that need to be dealt with on this particular Bill. There are a number of stakeholders that we need to approach to determine what their view on this particular issue is. So I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 39 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of Bill No. 39, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2003.

As many members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act establishes the provincial funding, the provincial financial assistance allocated to urban and rural municipalities. Accordingly, these amendments primarily give legal effect to decisions announced in the 2003-2004 budget.

The Bill provides for the amounts of the funds available this year to both urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to announce that the Bill provides for an increase this year for urban revenue sharing by \$4.9 million and an increase for rural

revenue sharing by \$4.3 million. This together with the funding for northern municipalities represents an increase of \$10 million to municipalities from last year.

These increases mean an additional \$3.6 million in unconditional funding for cities. For towns, villages, and resort villages, the increase is \$1.3 million. For rural municipalities the increase is \$4.3 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, my officials have consulted with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the cities, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities on how to distribute the funds this year. Their views have been incorporated. Each city and urban municipality will receive the same unconditional revenue-sharing grants as last year, plus an increase of \$6.73 per capita.

After negotiation with SARM, an agreement was reached on a new distribution formula that SARM agrees with and supports. The formula will include both a transportation and a service component. More specifically, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the formula is based 85 per cent on the road system in each RM, while the remaining 15 per cent is based on a three-year rolling average of expenditures such as protective services or culture and recreation services.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, costs will be adjusted based on taxable assessment of each RM and on the varying costs of providing services. Thus the formula will provide a degree of equalization for municipalities with different fiscal capacities.

As well, we have accepted SARM's recommendation that \$500,000 of the incremental funding to RMs would be conditional for the construction of heavy-haul roads. This responds, to some degree, to concerns from RMs in the Lloydminster area about needing more provincial funding for roads used by the heavy oil industry.

Amendments to the Act will be retroactive to April 1, 2003. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this means the new formula will be used for paying out grants to rural municipalities in the 2003-2004 fiscal year, although the full effects are to be phased in.

In closing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this increase of \$10 million increases the total amount of funding distributed through the revenue-sharing program to nearly \$70 million for Saskatchewan municipalities. I urge all members to support this Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move second reading of Bill No. 39, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Once again, it's a privilege to stand and respond to the second reading remarks of the minister regarding Bill No. 39, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act.

It is kind of an interesting Bill where it talks about the money that . . . the revenue sharing that the provincial government will be entering into with municipalities throughout the province, whether it's urban or rural. And it was quite interesting. It talks about the 2003-2004 budget.

And obviously he didn't . . . Quite often when we hear second reading speeches, we say, well we've consulted with and they're in full agreement with what we're doing here in this Act. And I would think this would be one situation where the minister has left this out of the speech and that they've consulted with the cities and said . . . and rural municipalities and the cities have said, yes, we're in full agreement with the amount of revenue sharing that is in this Bill, because it talks about revenue sharing, urban revenue sharing increased by \$4.9 million and rural revenue sharing by 4.3.

I certainly remember the lobbying done by the city mayors, the city mayors' caucus that has talked about increased revenue sharing and how they had taken the heat through the '90s when this government said that they should share in the pain which I think the cities had . . . certainly have done and urban and rural municipalities have done. They shared in the pain of the early '90s because the government backed away from the revenue sharing significantly.

So now that the government is certainly seeing revenues coming in, they would ask that they could share in the gain. And unfortunately they haven't been able to share in the gain quite as much as they had wanted to.

I believe the minister talked about 4.9 and he left out the remarks that the city mayors had to say after the budget speech. And that was probably a good idea because other than one mayor in Moose Jaw . . . other than one mayor, the one mayor of Moose Jaw who decided to break ranks with the city caucus members, it was interesting. He was the only one that thought, well I guess it's sufficient.

It was interesting, even the mayor of Prince Albert, even the mayor of Prince Albert had to pan the government. That really seems quite ironic, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Don Cody, the mayor of Prince Albert would have to go against his very government here to say that it just isn't enough revenue.

They are asking for 15 million. I believe they're asking for 20 million last year, 15 million this year, and this government has fallen far short, Mr. Speaker.

The member from Prince Albert Northcote is saying that how much would we give if we were in government? Well I think there's a . . . what was it, about a \$23 million loss that the municipalities would have loved to have had instead of being spent on potatoes throughout this province, Mr. Speaker — which this government has ended up with nothing.

If he wants to start asking how much money could have been put towards municipalities, we could certainly talk about the \$85 million that the Crown corporations have lost outside of this province, and that \$85 million came from taxes and people in this province.

So he can holler from his seat and to say how much would we give? I certainly know there'd be a lot more to give the municipalities if there was better management on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill goes on to talk about a number of other issues and the revenue sharing and how they are calculating the

revenue sharing. And it talks about the cities, talking about 6.7, \$6.73 per capita increase, and that's where the money will be distributed, how the money will be distributed.

It also talks about SARM having a bit of an input on how the money that they are going to be receiving is going to be distributed throughout the different RMs, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker.

But I think until we talk to these municipalities and just see what they think of this Bill and the amount that is put out in this Bill for revenue sharing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be amiss for us to just let it go. We would need to consult with a number of players — whether it's SARM, SUMA, the city mayors' caucus, those members. I would be very interested again to hear what Don Cody from Prince Albert would have to say. I'm sure he's very disappointed with this provincial government and the money that was allotted. So, Mr. Speaker, until we have the opportunity to consult, I would move that we would adjourn debate on Bill No. 39.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 35 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation
Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise on this occasion to move second reading of The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill is being proposed to the legislature subsequent to the 25-year Gaming Framework Agreement signed in 2003 by the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and the Government of Saskatchewan. As you will know, currently the First Nations' share of profits derived from the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation and the Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority is paid into the First Nations Fund. The 2002 Gaming Framework Agreement included some changes to that arrangement, and this Bill will implement those changes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me explain in just a little bit more detail. As part of the 2002 agreement, the government and the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) agreed that the FSIN would establish the First Nations trust in accordance with a trust indenture attached to the 2002 agreement.

For its part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the government agreed to expeditiously bring to this Assembly amendments to the Act that would enable the windup of the First Nations Fund and authorize payment of gaming profits to the First Nations trust fund. So then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the intent of this Bill — specifically to make amendments to the Act to enable the transition from the First Nations Fund to the First Nations trust.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Bill and the amendments it will enact are a significant and a very positive step forward, both for the province of Saskatchewan and the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The funding provided for economic development and other community projects through the First Nations Fund to date has been a very important and significant outcome of the development of the gaming industry in Saskatchewan. Mr. Deputy Speaker, none of this important

work will change because of the amendments that are proposed here today.

(15:30)

The trust indenture that will establish the First Nations trust contains a very similar set of purposes for which gaming funds can be used as was in the Act. In fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the trust indenture will ensure that in many respects the work and administration of the First Nations Fund will be carried on in a very similar manner through the First Nations trust.

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fundamental difference in the arrangement is that the First Nations trust will be directly responsible to the FSIN and will operate more independently of the provincial government in keeping with the terms and conditions set out in the 2002 Gaming Framework Agreement.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to just take a moment to expand on that point and provide you with some important details on how the First Nations trust will operate. As you know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Provincial Auditor has in the past expressed concerns with regard to some aspects of how the First Nations Fund was operated and administered. I want to assure you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and indeed all members of this Assembly, that both the government and the FSIN take these concerns very seriously.

Along with the increased responsibility and authority to be exercised by the FSIN over the Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation profit, comes increased accountability. As is the case now with the First Nations Fund, the First Nations trust will be administered by a board of trustees. FSIN will have the authority to appoint the trustees independent of the government. The trustees will be required to get yearly reports from all beneficiaries of the trust. These reports must demonstrate that all money received was used for approved purposes as set out in the trust indenture.

The trustees must also appoint a qualified independent auditor to provide a written report on the trust's financial statements within 120 days of the end of each fiscal year. The trustees are required to provide the government with copies of the auditor's documentation including audited financial statements, annual report, any report prepared by the auditor, and access to documents submitted by the beneficiaries.

In addition, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in accordance with the 2002 Gaming Framework Agreement, the terms of the trust indenture cannot be amended without the agreement of the government, and monies will only flow to the trust if the trustees fulfill their obligations in accordance with the trust indenture.

If the trustees do not fulfill their obligations, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, as the lead agency responsible for overseeing the trust, would initiate a series of steps to ensure compliance.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to add that the coming-into-force provisions in the draft Bill provide that the sections pertinent to the transition from fund to trust will be proclaimed only after the trust is established by the FSIN.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, once the First Nations trust is established, the minister will be provided the authority to make payments to the First Nations trust, thus beginning a new page in the administration of gaming profits by First Nations.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill No. 35, The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2003.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to join in to the debate . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wakefield: — With leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Deputy Speaker, and sorry to my colleague for interrupting.

I'd like to introduce to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and through you to the House, someone sitting in the east gallery that really needs no introduction. Paul Martin is certainly a recognized promoter of the economy and the building economy in Saskatchewan, and I want to welcome here to the Assembly. Please join me in welcoming to the session.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — Why is the member on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you. I'd like to join with the member from Lloydminster in welcoming Mr. Paul Martin to the Legislative Assembly. And he is certainly well known to members on both sides of the House.

And one of the things that is most, I think, beneficial about Mr. Martin's work is he maintains a very positive attitude to all of the wonderful things that are going on in our economy and has been instrumental in some campaigns to promote Saskatchewan. And we certainly enjoy his positive attitude, the work we've been able to do together. And we certainly join with the opposition in welcoming Mr. Martin here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 35 — The Saskatchewan Gaming Corporation Amendment Act, 2003 (continued)

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker.

It's a privilege again to respond to the second reading speech given regarding Bill No. 35, regarding Saskatchewan gaming and the remarks made by the minister.

There are a number of areas again that this Bill deals with that certainly, I guess, raises a few red flags on our side of the House and a number of areas that we're going to want to check out before we see this Bill go any further, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talked about this Bill is a consequence of the 25-year agreement that they've entered into with the FSIN regarding gaming, which is a bit of a concern right off the bat but we've talked about that before. And I'm going to move on to what this Bill talks about in, specifically.

It talks about moving payment from the First Nations Fund and establishing a new First Nations trust fund and that's where the monies would be directed to. I guess the whole issue, and the minister touched on it, he touched on the Provincial Auditor and the concerns that the Provincial Auditor has regarding the accountability and the transparency of the former fund, the First Nations Fund, as we've had a number of questions and concerns on it as well. We've raised them in the House.

We've been concerned that at times perhaps the money hasn't gone to where it was intentionally set up to go towards. And when we asked questions, we felt that at many, many times the whole process wasn't transparent and wasn't accountable. And as I said, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it wasn't just the members on this side of the House, it was the Provincial Auditor that also showed concerns over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker.

The minister talks about reporting processes, that the money will be controlled by the FSIN, and more by the FSIN and not the government now, whereas the government had a bit of a role to play in it. But he also talked about the accountability steps that were being put into place, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And there are a number . . .

The Deputy Speaker: — Order, order. Order. While this is time for debate, there is rules in that we do it one at a time and as recognized by the Chair. I know that the member from Indian Head-Milestone has the floor and I would appreciate if all members would pay attention.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister talked about steps to ensure accountability, and I guess if they are there and they work, that is one thing. But until we see the steps that have been put into place to ensure accountability, until we have a chance to look at the Bill and make sure that the steps will make it more transparent and will be accountable, Mr. Speaker . . . Accountable to the people that this money was directed for, people on-reserve that really in so many cases live in poverty. And it's an absolute shame when you hear some of the misuse of money that should have been directed to those very people, Mr. Speaker.

So until there is full accountability, until we are comfortable with the accountability steps, the steps for transparency that have been put into place with this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, we'd move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 34 — The Film Employment Tax Credit
Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act.

This Bill further strengthens Saskatchewan's pool of local artists and technicians who support the province's growing film industry. Specifically the proposed Bill will extend the deeming provision of The Film Employment Tax Credit Act. As you know, The Film Employment Tax Credit Act was originally passed in 1998 and it does provide a 35 per cent tax credit on eligible Saskatchewan labour costs for film and television productions produced by Saskatchewan companies.

Mr. Speaker, the deeming provision allows non-Saskatchewan residents to be deemed as eligible for the film employment tax credit, provided they supply training to local artists and technicians. SaskFILM has told us that the deeming feature is one of the most attractive features of the tax credit. By extending the deeming provision, we give local producers a competitive advantage in attracting feature films and television series to our province.

Amendments will allow the industry to continue to hire expertise on large-scale productions that may not be available in the province and which continue to strengthen the level of training available for our local production crews. As well, Mr. Speaker, a number of members of the production community have brought to my attention that without the significant level of trained people needed, it reduces the number of productions we would be able to deliver. So this helps them to be able to do all the productions that they received funding for within Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the deeming provision is key to the successful marketing of Saskatchewan as a viable film location, and is particularly important in attracting large-scale productions that have the most impact on the economy of the province such as feature films and television series.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of the Bill.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again it's a privilege to respond to the second reading speech regarding Bill No. 34, the film employment tax credit.

This is a very interesting piece of legislation. It's interesting because every year it comes forward — it's being coming forward since 1998, the minister said — and every year we've supported it. And we supported it because it gives tax credit and allows the film, has given tax credit and has allowed the film industry to expand in this province like you wouldn't believe. It's been a true success story on what tax credits and giving tax breaks can do in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Now unfortunately if the government would quit just saying okay, we can only do it in the film industry but we won't do it . . . try it anywhere else, Mr. Speaker. That's what is holding this province back so often, Mr. Speaker. The tax credit has been a good idea. The deeming provision allowing non-Saskatchewan residents to come in as long as they're

instructing and teaching is a good idea. It's expanded the film industry and created a film industry in the province.

Unfortunately with this government, though, any time an industry gets going they just can't help but get involved financially, Mr. Speaker. And that's what this government has done again; it's got directly involved in the film industry.

It's been interesting over the last couple of months, or four or five months, talking to different people in the film industry and saying, well how come we didn't get any money? They're giving money to Minds Eye and how . . . There's so many other film companies that are being left out.

Once again they've got it right with the tax credit because the tax credit is for all, anyone in the film business. Where they fail to get it right is when they start picking winners and losers as to who gets government money and who doesn't, Mr. Speaker, and that is done over and over and over again by this government in many, many different sectors.

So, Mr. Speaker, the minister once again . . . And we'll support this Bill once again because we believe in tax credits. That's the way to go as opposed to direct, financial injection into hand-picked companies by this provincial government, Mr. Speaker.

But once again, until we have an opportunity to check with all the players in the film industry — not just hand-picked ones by the government — that they're still happy with this Bill or whether any amendments could be done to make the Bill, enhance the Bill, to enhance the film industry in this province, Mr. Speaker, I'd move that we would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(15:45)

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 25 — The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I know that members are disappointed that the member from Indian Head-Milestone isn't on his feet but I would like to respond to this legislation, The Personal Care Homes Act.

The intent of the Bill, as I understand it, is to provide seniors and disabled people from the sudden closure of large personal care homes in the province. New operators of personal care homes that are intended to accommodate 21 people or more are going to be required to post a bond or another form of security to ensure that if in the event of the closure of the home through financial circumstances, that there is a source of funds that can be accessed in order to continue the care for these individuals and provide a transition to another facility for them.

The Bill also provides for the opportunity if in the event of the closure of a personal care home that an administrator can be appointed to administer the home and to access the bond or other security that's put into place so that the continuity of care can happen. So I think that this legislation is a very important bit of legislation for seniors and people that require the services of a personal care home.

Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of things in this Bill that do constitute some kind of concern. Initially it's our understanding, or at least in the situation as it currently exists, that most of the personal care homes in Saskatchewan, representing 95 or more per cent of the beds that are provided by personal care homes, are provided in very small personal care homes of 10 beds or less.

And while there is the provision in this legislation that says something to the effect that this is not necessarily limited to personal care homes of 21 or over, that the minister may require an operator in any existing category of personal care home to file similar bonds. And for the very small personal care homes, this is a concern.

As I mentioned, in Saskatchewan, 96 or 97 per cent of personal care homes are those that accommodate 10 individuals or less and they have a very good track record over the years and have provided very, very good service.

And there is a concern by the operators of these small personal care homes that this legislation could indeed be implied or imposed on them as well. And I know that that is a concern from them, and it doesn't seem to be the intent of this legislation.

Certainly the intent of the legislation about providing a framework of security and reliability for residents of personal care homes is an important concept, and we very much support that.

Mr. Speaker, we think this is good legislation. There are some issues that I think need to be discussed and clarified surrounding what the regulations will do, and the intent of the application of these regulations to other categories. And I know that we can deal with those issues in Committee of the Whole and so with that I would suggest that we move this Bill forward.

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

Bill No. 22

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 22 — The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on Bill No. 2, the amendments to The Pharmacy Act, 2003, as well.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation provides for the pharmacists of this province to be enabled to provide emergency birth-control prescriptions without the scrip from a physician.

Mr. Speaker, over the years emergency birth-control medications have been available in this province from a physician's office, and the advocacy of these prescriptions is time sensitive as you can imagine, Mr. Speaker.

The situation as it exists provides for doctors to be able to write these scrips and their most effective opportunity of doing that is in the 24- to 36-hour period after intercourse has occurred. And so time sensitivity of the availability of these prescriptions is a very important issue.

In many areas of the province, the access to a family physician in a time-sensitive way is very problematic, and the situation is relatively uniform across the province in that many pharmacists operate with much longer hours in communities than what community clinics or doctors' offices do.

It's my understanding that there has been work done and protocols have been agreed to between the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Saskatchewan Medical Association, and the pharmacists of the province in order to establish appropriate protocols for pharmacists to be able to independently prescribe this important medication. Mr. Speaker, it's a good example of collaboration between health care professionals where a problem was identified and a pragmatic solution was arrived at between the medical professionals. And this is the result of this collaboration.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've communicated with these various regulatory agencies. We are assured that there's going to be a proper program put in place for the accreditation of pharmacists in order to be able to participate in this program and prescribe this very important medication. And so, Mr. Speaker, we certainly support this initiative and commend it as a good example of collaborative practice in the medical system in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Industry and Resources Vote 23

Subvote (IR01)

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. With me today to my left is Mr. Larry Spannier, the deputy minister of the Department of Industry and Resources. And to his left is Ms. Debbie Wilkie, who is the executive director of corporate resources of the department. To my right is Mr. Bruce Wilson, the assistant deputy minister for petroleum and natural gas. Behind Mr. Spannier is George Patterson, who is the executive director of exploration and geological services. Behind me is Mr. Jim Marshall, the assistant deputy minister of resource and economic policy. Behind Mr. Wilson is Ms. Denise Haas, the acting assistant deputy minister of industry development.

And also seated at the back are Gerry Adamson, who is the vice-president of the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership; Louise Usick, who is the director of finance and administration of Tourism Saskatchewan; and Lynn Flury, who's the vice-president and director of marketing for Tourism Saskatchewan.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees, and I'd like to take the opportunity to welcome the minister and his officials this afternoon. It's good to have you here to assist the minister in answering these questions because I'm sure that he's going to have to refer to your assistance on a few of them.

Mr. Minister, I would like you, first of all, to outline the government policy on public-private partnerships as far as the construction for instance of any project, any industry project in the province where the government has some partnership in it.

If you could outline for me what the government policy is regarding, specifically, the responsibility for hiring and tendering?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I think to assist in answering that question, Mr. Chair, it would be helpful if the member would indicate whether she's speaking of partnerships within what we would call executive government, that is in relation to things that government owns, like highways, or is she speaking about things that might be done with third parties, like hospitals, schools? Or is she speaking about things that might be done in partnership with the private sector, like ethanol plants and the like? Or is she speaking about all three or some of them? And if the member could clarify what kind of projects she might be talking about, I'd appreciate it.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, what I am speaking of is . . . I would like the minister to outline, first of all, the policy regarding public-private ownership in industry, for instance, something like the ethanol plants. And if you could give me an indication of what the government's role is and responsibility is as far as putting forth the policy for tendering processes and hiring processes for that kind of construction.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, I'm very happy to answer the question. The member has clarified that she's generally . . . she's talking about partnerships with industry.

The general policy of the Government of Saskatchewan is that we want industry to be self-sufficient and to develop on its own. We believe that we have a role to play in creating a positive environment for industry. There are certain tax changes we've made in that regard, which I won't detail unless the member wishes me to. There are other things that we have done. We provide infrastructure.

But generally speaking, we would prefer to see development in the private sector proceed without a partnership with government but proceed on its own so that if there's, for example, a new mine, a diamond mine let's say, we would want that to be built by the private sector.

Having said that, there are some situations where government, not only our government but other governments, have wanted a certain sector of the economy to develop and it appears that

there isn't sufficient private sector investment. And in some cases governments have entered into arrangements with the private sector to do so.

(16:00)

With respect to the Department of Industry and Resources, the department for which I'm responsible along with a few others, it does not partner with private industry in that regard. There are some instances where other agencies such as the Crown Investments Corporation have partnered with private business to build industries. From the point of view of the Department of Industry and Resources, we don't do that directly. And, as I said, we recognize that sometimes it will be necessary. We do not believe that in terms of the long-term building of the economy that it is . . . necessarily should be the norm or the regular way to do things.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, could you please outline for me the structure of ownership of the OSB (oriented strand board) plant at Meadow Lake?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — The member is certainly entitled to have that information. I do want to point out that we, in the Department of Industry and Resources for whom . . . for which I am responsible to answer, do not have a relationship with anyone in terms of the OSB plant at Meadow Lake. That is, there is an investment, and the member is correct that there's a partnership between a government entity and I believe it's Tolko. That actually is an investment through the Crown Investments Corporation for which, as the member knows, the member for Meadow Lake is responsible and I'm sure will be pleased to answer the member's questions.

These officials will not have brought the detail about tendering, about investment and so on, even though they'll have a general knowledge about it or some specific knowledge, but they won't have prepared themselves to provide information about that because it doesn't fall under their jurisdiction. It falls under the jurisdiction of the president of the Crown Investments Corporation and his officials. And I do know, Mr. Chair, that the minister in charge of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) and his officials, I'm sure, would be more than happy to deal with the member with respect to any questions she may have in that regard. But my officials are not responsible for that file and therefore will not be providing me with detailed information about that file.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, is it within the jurisdiction of your ministry or your department to comment on the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement? Is that a brainchild of your government?

For instance, when there is . . . the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement requires that there be hiring of Crown construction projects by union people, that union people have a right to have the jobs in those kind of construction projects. And so I'm wondering if you could comment on whether your government in fact would answer questions regarding Crown construction tendering and the agreement.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well in answer to the member's question I want to make it clear that yes, our government will answer

every question about the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement or anything else. But the questions, of course, should be raised in the appropriate forum.

In this particular instance, again I'm not trying to be difficult . . . We have many, many things that the Department of Industry and Resources is responsible for and for which I am responsible to answer questions; but it does happen to be the case that in the case of the Meadow Lake pulp mill that isn't part of my responsibilities directly.

And in the case of the Crown Construction Tendering Agreement, that isn't something that the Department of Industry and Resources is responsible for. It isn't something that I, as a minister, am responsible for.

There are other ministers that are responsible for that policy and they would be very happy to answer the member's questions. But it is unfortunately the case, for the time being at least, that I am not the minister in charge of those areas and therefore I must respectfully suggest to the member that the questions should be addressed to the appropriate minister with the appropriate personnel present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, I guess the fact of the matter is, Mr. Minister, that in this House it's very difficult to be getting answers given to the opposition regarding anything to do with Crown investments. And we've had some problems in estimates having any minister answer questions on investments and we've just had to sort of sit and wait and hope that another minister who is referred to by one of your ministers would answer the questions. It appears as though this is sort of what's happening again today now.

Mr. Minister, there is an OSB plant being built at Meadow Lake, and right now there are unionized workers who have indicated to me that they're not able to get work there. Yes, Tolko does own 75 per cent of that, about \$150 million investment from what I understand. I understand also through a question that I submitted to your government, a written question, that there is about \$55 million in both loan guarantees and government equity in total put into that.

I understand that there is some First Nations involvement in it and that there is a hope that First Nations as well as the communities, the northwest communities, will have an opportunity to buy more into that in the future.

But as it stands right now, the focus of my questions is on how the hiring process was done and how the tendering process was done. And these people are asking me for some answers.

Some of the union workers are not getting work in their own province. Rather, there has been contracting coming from . . . contracts, rather, given to companies outside of Saskatchewan on a number of fronts and they're bringing their own workers in with them.

And so this is really very difficult for people in Saskatchewan who are — some of them — farming, but also working as unionized workers and trying to make a living. They're wondering just whether there was a fair tendering process that went on in the first place and who was responsible for that

tendering process.

Tolko owns 75 per cent. The government, at this point, has \$55 million in that, one way or the other. And so what I'm asking you today I would expect that any minister of your government might be able to answer in the event that that's the case, that the government has that much money put into it.

Does the government take the authority and responsibility to determine or to have some say in who in fact will be hired for those projects and whether or not tendering should go out to companies within Saskatchewan or whether or not there was any fair tendering done at all?

This is the question and I would appreciate the minister's response on this. Does the government have the responsibility and the authority, in this public-private partnership, to have some say as far as tendering goes and the hiring goes?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Chair, I'm trying to be helpful to the member and I'm not trying to be difficult. But the simple fact of the matter is that I can't answer questions in the House that do not fall under my responsibility.

The member . . . I appreciate having the member's views. I respect her views. She's certainly entitled to answers. But the simple fact of the matter is if the member gets up and asks me about hog barns — we're all concerned about hog barns — but I will say that that's a question for the Minister of Agriculture. If she asks me about hospitals, I'll say that's a question for the Minister of Health. If she asks me about schools, I'll say that's a question for the Minister of Learning.

And the point is, Mr. Chair, she's asking me questions about a policy which is the policy of another department of government and another minister, both in terms of the investment with Tolko, which is not an investment that my department has made directly, and in terms of the tendering policy, which is not a policy that my department has formulated.

And the member, in doing her job in a reasonable and skilful way as I'm sure she can, can address her questions to the appropriate ministers. I actually am not the minister of government assigned to answer questions for other ministers. And I have every confidence that my colleagues in those areas can answer the questions, and I certainly encourage the member to direct her questions to the appropriate members.

And I understand she's frustrated that I am not able to answer questions for other ministers, but the member has been a member for quite some time, and I think she knows that I can't answer questions in the House that do not come within my office. So thank you.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to say to that minister your government has reorganized and restructured so many times that it is almost impossible to come to understand just exactly what items are the responsibility and under the jurisdiction of different ministers.

Last year we had a number of questions that we asked a minister of the Crown that . . . questions of, that he should have or she should have certainly been able to answer, and had that

responsibility for years.

Now with all of your restructuring, your reorganizing — and I believe it's done with the intent of putting off answers and making excuses not to give answers — we have to say that this is a very, very difficult situation to get answers to the people of Saskatchewan, on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well this is the way it is, Mr. Minister.

And I guess, you know, you're referring me today to the minister responsible for CIC and I'll look forward to approaching that minister when estimates come up, if there are CIC estimates that come up.

Can you tell me today, Mr. Minister, are there going to be CIC estimates that are going to come up in this House?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well as the member knows, Mr. Chair, the legislature has decided to create an entire committee known as the Crown Corporations Committee to deal with questions relating to Crown corporations.

And I hope the public knows — and I'm sure they will — that the member and her party are entitled to go to the Crown Corporations Committee and ask questions. And she should address her questions — I understand it's meeting again on May 27 — to the appropriate forum.

If it's helpful to the member, Mr. Chair, I do wish to point out that at page 75 of the estimates, which certainly is provided to the member, there is a description under summary of expenditure, of the things for which the Department of Industry and Resources is responsible.

And I might suggest to the member that she might wish to read the material that is provided to her and all other members of the Legislative Assembly as to what ministers are responsible for, and I could read it to her if she wishes. But I would be more than happy to answer any questions that pertain to my responsibilities which, Mr. Chair, is the rule of the House as the member well knows. But I would refer her to page 75, which would give her an indication of what my department is responsible for.

I would also say to her that if she is confused — as she says — as to which minister is responsible for what, I'd like to undertake to send her a complete list of the ministers of the Crown and their responsibilities, Mr. Chair, in an effort to be helpful to the member as I always attempt to be.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well those are some very interesting but fairly condescending remarks. Mr. Chair, by the time the minister sends me a listing of responsibilities of the minister, it wouldn't surprise me that they would shuffle cabinet again, or do something, or else the House will be completed for the year.

Mr. Chair, Mr. Chair, the minister speaks of addressing this in the Crown Corporations Committee. It took a lot of prompting and probing by the Saskatchewan Party opposition to even get them to call the Crown Corps Committee to sit. They were certainly reluctant to do that. May 27 there will be some

questions. There's no doubt about that.

But further to that, Mr. Chair, I'd just like to say on behalf of the people that have asked me these questions, and the people of the province of Saskatchewan, they are somewhat disgruntled with the fact that in this forum, the Legislative Assembly where there should be openness and accountability and transparency, that we cannot get answers for the people of Saskatchewan to view on their television sets, to hear on their television sets, and to be satisfied with the minister's response or not satisfied.

So, Mr. Chair, I will turn the questioning over to my colleagues right now.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Minister, I'm looking at the budget for Industry and Resources and I notice there's the vote (IR06), resource and economic policy. There's approximately \$2.5 million allocated to that particular vote.

The information that is provided in the estimates indicates that this unit . . . or this money is being used to conduct research and identify . . . or do an analysis and develop policies to encourage economic growth and address climate change. And that's the area that I'm somewhat interested in, Minister.

What type of activity and what is your department doing to deal with the whole area of climate change, and in particular with the federal government's implementation plan for the Kyoto Protocol?

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In answer to the question, Mr. Chair, there is a federal-provincial . . . I'm sorry I meant to say a provincial-territorial committee of officials from Saskatchewan and also from the other provinces and territories that meet to discuss issues surrounding the climate change issue. And climate change, of course, is something that all governments are concerned about. And what has been in the news, mainly in the last number of months or maybe few years, has been the Kyoto accord.

And one of the frustrations that we've had, and the officials are working on, is how to respond to the federal government. And it's very difficult because we've been waiting for the federal government to come up with a plan for the implementation of the Kyoto accord.

They have ratified the Kyoto accord, which says that greenhouse gas emissions must be reduced by a certain amount by a certain time, but they have not said how that's going to be done. And what our department has been trying to do is to analyze the impact that the Kyoto accord could have on industry in Saskatchewan and also make representations to the federal government and others from time to time as to the approach that we think should be taken.

One of the frustrations, as I said, is that the federal government has not yet given us an indication of how much each industry might be required to do. For example, how much should the agricultural industry or the farmers be required to do? How much should the oil and gas industry be required to do? How

much should the electrical generators, like SaskPower, be required to do? Not just in Saskatchewan but across the country.

And you know we have been saying, well we need to have a plan that is fair if we're going to do this, that fairly allocates the cost all across the country. And we don't want the Western industries like farming and energy to be hit without others bearing part of the load as well.

And actually the federal government hasn't come up with any plan so it's very difficult. But we are proceeding with climate change projects in five areas.

First of all, public education. We put out some material about climate change which I'm sure the member has read. We are looking at the development of new technology dealing with climate change — research into adaptation to climate change and impacts of climate change, development of biological sinks for carbon dioxide in soil and forests, and also working on energy conservation and alternative energy.

This isn't all done in this branch of Industry and Resources. They also work with agencies like the Saskatchewan Research Council where the energy conservation office is located, SaskEnergy and SaskPower which have certain measures to try and conserve energy, and so on.

So those are some of the things that we are trying to do. The situation is, as I've said, somewhat uncertain because we don't actually know what the plan of the federal government will be to actually implement the Kyoto accord which seeks to address some issues surrounding climate change.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, in your government's Speech from the Throne, the Speech from the Throne indicated that your government was going to negotiate with the federal government particularly in the area of agricultural carbon sinks. And I asked the Minister of Agriculture what his department is doing in that area and he had indicated that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs was the lead ministry on this issue.

I'm wondering, has your department got an involvement in this particular issue? Are you working with the Intergovernmental Affairs ministry on the carbon sinks, not only in agriculture but in forestry? And if so, what work is being done currently?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — To answer the question specifically, Mr. Chair, yes, we are working with others, in particular the Department of Agriculture and Food in Saskatchewan, to put forward a position to the federal government.

And I want to say that, in our view, Ottawa's current policy on carbon sinks unduly penalizes Saskatchewan farmers and other Western Canadian farmers. As is well known — and the member knows because he is a farmer himself and I'm sure he has sunk some carbon through carbon sinks — farmers in Saskatchewan have moved to zero till and minimum till, and also have cut down the amount of summerfallow. And when farmers refrain from disturbing the soil as they have and changed their practices, that has the effect of sequestering carbon in the ground, which is a good thing.

And we think that the farmers and ranchers have been good

stewards of the environment by doing that. And if we want to continue building on good soil conservation success, our farmers have to be acknowledged as the owners of that carbon sink and receive benefit for the resulting carbon credits.

Now what has happened up until now, the federal government has said that they get the credit for the carbon sinks that have been done by the agricultural producers. And we view that policy by them as being unacceptable, and we will continue to make that point to the federal government as clearly and loudly as we can. And we are working with the Department of Agriculture and Food who are mainly responsible for taking that message to Ottawa.

But I want to let the member know also that there was a standing committee of the Senate; I believe it's called the Standing Committee on Agriculture but I could be mistaken. Senator Wiebe is on it and Senator Tkachuk from Saskatchewan, and others. And I actually appeared in front of that committee within the last six weeks I think, or two months anyway, and made this very point to them, that one of the things we want Ottawa to do is to recognize the farmers and ranchers and that those carbon sinks should belong to them, that they should get credit for doing that as distinct from the federal government taking credit.

So that's our position. I can't say that we have met with success in Ottawa. In this regard I guess we're probably in the same position as Alberta and Manitoba in particular, and maybe some others. But that is our policy and we continue to work in that regard.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, there was a number of things that you mentioned as far as the farmers and ranchers of this province receiving credit for the things that they do. And we certainly would support that. As I've said to the Minister of Agriculture, I think it's a hugely important issue and I urge the Minister of Agriculture to stay on top of this issue because it's one that could have some long-lasting, positive effects in this whole area of climate change.

We know for sure that all users of energy will most likely be incurring increased costs as energy producers are forced to reduce their carbon emissions and thereby pass those costs along to the consumers. And farmers and ranchers of course are large consumers of energy in the form of diesel, and gasoline, and electrical energy, and natural gas, and so on. And so therefore I would urge your department to do what it needs to do to move this issue along. And the Minister of Agriculture had indicated that the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs has written a letter to the federal government. Have you as minister been in a discussion with any federal ministers on this whole area?

And not only with this regard. I realize that the carbon sink areas falls more in the area of the Minister of Agriculture and the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs. But also I think it's important for your department and yourself, Minister, to be on top of the cost side of the equation and get those . . . that information. And I understand that the federal government has put the preliminary implementation plan forward, and if we are going to be meeting our obligations under the Kyoto Protocol we will have to get the plans in place and the regulations in

place and so on.

And time is of the essence. These things don't happen overnight. And it seems that, to me, that somebody needs to take a lead in this area. And if perhaps the federal government is lagging somewhat, I'm asking if you and your government are taking a lead in some of these areas, Minister?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, we are. I wouldn't . . . I do agree with the member's characterization of the issue and I wouldn't want the member to think that we are only writing letters to Ottawa. We are doing other things as well.

We have meetings on a regular basis of our representatives through officials with the federal and other provincial representatives to try to press this point. And certainly we will also be making representations at a ministerial level. I've appeared at the standing committee of the Senate when they were in town to make this very point. And certainly the Minister of Agriculture, myself, probably the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, will take the opportunity in discussions with our federal and other counterparts to make this same point.

So we share the same view as the member. We share the same sense of urgency. We, as I said in my previous response, have not succeeded in convincing the federal government yet but we're going to keep trying. And in that regard we're no different than the Government of Manitoba or the Government of Alberta. I think we're all of one mind but we haven't successfully convinced the federal government to see the issue our way. And of course it's like a lot of other issues with the federal government — we're unhappy with their position, but we're not really in a position to tell them what to do.

But in terms of trying to convince them what should be done, we're sure trying to do that — meeting with them, writing them, and we'll be meeting with them again. And we'll be pressing forward the very same points that the member is making because I think on this issue there's no difference in view between the opposition and government.

Mr. Hart: — Well, Minister, in the vote (IR06), as I've indicated, there's approximately two and a half million dollars allocated to that particular vote. The majority of that, \$2.254 million, is for salaries. Could you give us an indication as to how many people are in that particular vote and perhaps the responsibilities of those individuals in that area of your department?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes, there are 37 individuals that work in that branch of the department and they are policy analysts. Their job is to conduct economic research and identify, analyze, and develop policies to encourage economic growth in the areas of climate change, energy conservation, and resource development. And I might say this includes tax structures for coal, industrial, and metallic minerals — in other words mining — to optimize revenues.

And one of the things that they've been working on is, you know looking at some of the tax structures. And we're certainly meeting with a lot of success. The oil and gas sector is certainly taking off, and there's a lot of good work I think underway in

the area of mining as well. And the work that these people do, in conjunction I should say with some other branches, because we also have exploration and geological services which is very interested in oil and gas and mining, and we have a petroleum and natural gas division which also is as well; not to mention mineral revenues, which collect the money which is very important too.

So there are 37 individuals in that branch. And they advise government as to what our policies to promote economic development should be.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, in addition to those 37 people that work in policy development, how much money does your department spend on hiring consultant . . . outsourcing policy development work?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — With respect to this area of resource policy, the department does not consult outside with respect to the development of policy.

I mean, certainly we consult with many people, but not in a paid sense. They go out and we go out consulting with people across the province, talking to people that work for companies, talking sometimes to other governments, but that is done in-house. We don't hire people as paid consultants to develop our policy. That would be something that we would do inside the government and these people would do themselves.

I don't mean to suggest that there would never be an occasion where the department would hire consultants. It's not actually a huge thing. There might be some consulting in some areas — information technology, management structure, that kind of thing.

But in terms of this area, we don't believe that we spent . . . have been spending money in terms of paying outside consultants.

Mr. Hart: — Minister, so if I understood you correctly, you don't hire consultants to develop policy for you, but you do hire consultants to do research in specific areas, whether . . . And my question doesn't necessarily pertain to the resource sector but also to the economic development area.

We know full well and we certainly had a lively . . . number of lively sessions in this House over a consultant's report that your department hired to do some work on the viability of the forestry centre in Prince Albert, as an example.

And my question is: what type of expenditure would your department have in hiring consultants of all types and for whatever reason?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Yes I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that the . . . with respect to specific projects where consultants might be hired by the Department of Industry and Resources in a given year, probably somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700,000 to \$800,000 might typically be spent on consulting services in the private sector out of a department budget this year of approximately \$77 million.

So it's a small amount of the department's budget and it would relate not to policy development but to specific projects so that if there was some proposal for some kind of project and the department needed advice, they might get advice. The P.A. (Prince Albert) forestry centre has been mentioned, where I think at least one and maybe more people were asked for their advice and reports were obtained and so on. And so it would be in that kind of range.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to welcome the officials here today. We've always found the officials from this department to be very helpful in estimates in the past, and we appreciate your knowledge base and your hard work and your diligence, and now welcome here today.

Mr. Minister, Cameco's McArthur River uranium mine has been shut down for some time due to flooding. Of course that mine is not only the richest mine in Saskatchewan but the richest mine in the world.

I'm wondering if the minister would have an update on the conditions at that mine and a target date for restart.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised, Mr. Chair, that Cameco now has the water flow under control and the machinery is now above water. And they're in the process of repairing some electrical equipment that was apparently damaged by the flooding.

We don't have a firm date as to when the situation will be considered completely resolved but we do know that the matter is as well in hand as this kind of situation could be and that a great deal of progress has been made. And as I say, the situation is certainly under control, the machinery is above water, and repairs are being undertaken even as we speak. And so they're on their way to resuming normal operations.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Minister, assuming that it will still be some months before the McArthur River mine is back in production and because McArthur River is such a high percentage of uranium production in this province, I wonder what impact the shutdown of this mine is likely to have on uranium revenues.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that Cameco has an adequate supply of uranium that has already been mined and that, therefore, they will continue to process the stockpile that they have. And so we don't have any indication that this very unfortunate circumstance, if repaired within the time frame that I think they're looking at, will actually impact their ability to mill and sell their product.

So we think that, in that sense, the matter is certainly under control, that they had already mined a lot of uranium that can be milled, and so that process we don't expect to be interrupted.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I wonder, could you give us a rough idea how many months' supply would be in that stockpile at the present rate of sales?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well I want to preface this by saying that nobody really knows exactly how long it will take to completely resolve the situation, but I'm advised that we

believe from Cameco that they may be looking at a period of four to six months.

Mr. Stewart: — Yes, I understand that four to six months is the period expected to get the mine back into production.

My question is, how many months supply are in the stockpile that's been mined at the present rate of sales?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well the exact amount of their supply would be, you know, private business information. But to answer the question, we're advised that the supply would exceed the time period that they see as necessary to fix the mine. So in other words, if it is another four to six months, they feel that they have enough stockpiled that their ability to mill uranium is not going to be interrupted.

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Minister, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans is now involved in regulating particularly the oil and gas business and the mining business in this province as it pertains to waterways or what the Department of Fisheries and Oceans perceives as waterways. What concerns does the department have over the federal government moving in in this regulatory and policing role?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well we do have concerns. We have concerns from the point of view that I believe, if my memory serves me correctly, this area of regulation of fisheries in Saskatchewan, relative to uranium mining, was formerly — before the arrival of federal officials — handled by, I think, about four or five people that worked for the provincial Department of the Environment. And I believe some dozens of Fisheries and Oceans people from Ottawa now are concerned about this kind of issue.

And so our concern is — we want certainly the environment to be respected and anything that needs to be done should be done — but we would have a concern if added layers of bureaucracy resulted in delays in necessary approvals. And so we have been communicating with the federal government to say we want a streamlined process so that industrial development can proceed.

And this isn't only relevant to the uranium companies but is relevant in other areas as well. And we are working with the federal government to try to arrive at a streamlined process with Fisheries and Oceans.

And I might say that we've made some progress with respect to the federal environmental officials to try to streamline the process there, which is . . . Because the process there, at the federal level, has been the source of some frustration for industry. We're trying to arrive at appropriate protocols with the federal government in the area of fisheries as well.

But we are still in the process of doing that as opposed to being able to say we have achieved that. But we're certainly doing our very, very best to achieve that and we'll continue to do so.

Mr. Stewart: — When the Department of Fisheries and Oceans came to Saskatchewan, Mr. Minister, was the Saskatchewan government involved in discussions beforehand or did the Department of Fisheries and Oceans more or less impose themselves upon us, duplicating our own SERM (Saskatchewan

Environment and Resource Management) department's functions?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that if there were discussions with the provincial representatives, those discussions would have been with people from the Department of the Environment, not our Department of Industry and Resources, so I'm unable to give the member any details of discussions with officials. But I know that the Minister of the Environment would be more than happy to provide that information to the member.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, looking at item (IRO7) in the Estimates for Industry and Resources, petroleum research initiative shows a figure of \$1 million estimated for 2003-2004, as well as \$1 million last year.

Mr. Minister, what functions are included in that item?

(16:45)

Hon. Mr. Cline: — That is actually a grant to the PTRC, the Petroleum Technology Research Centre.

And as the member knows, but members of the public watching this may not know it, the Petroleum Technology Research Centre is a research centre located in the research park at the University of Regina. And it is a partnership of the province of Saskatchewan — so we give the \$1 million — the Government of Canada, which gives I think a similar amount; the Saskatchewan Research Council is involved, the University of Regina has some involvement, and also the private sector. Industry puts money into it as well.

And it is a very exciting place. And I would encourage anyone to learn more about it. And I'll just give one example.

In Saskatchewan — many people do not know this — 85 per cent of the known oil reserves are unrecoverable using conventional means. In other words, we know the oil is there — we don't actually have trouble locating the oil in Saskatchewan — but you can only get 15 per cent of it out of the ground. Eighty-five per cent of it is basically embedded in sediment or rock, I think.

And so what we're trying to do through the Petroleum Technology Research Centre, in partnership with the federal government, the University of Regina, and the private sector and the Saskatchewan Research Council, is find a way to get the rest of the oil out of the ground, which of course would be beneficial to industry and everyone in the province.

And one of the very interesting things that is being looked at up there — and this isn't just the PTRC but also the international test centre for carbon dioxide sinks and also the Weyburn test site of EnCana — is together, the PTRC and those other parties I just mentioned are trying to figure out if they can take carbon dioxide, for example from SaskPower which burns coal which creates carbon dioxide, and pump that into the ground and leave the carbon dioxide there, thereby reducing the climate change effect. And at the same time, when they pump that into the ground, it makes it easier to get the oil out of the ground.

So you kind of have a win-win. You can improve the environment by sinking the carbon dioxide into the ground, but at the same time you can get the oil, more oil out of the ground.

And so the work they're doing is very important. Our contribution of \$1 million per year to that centre is just one part of their budget. But the work they do and with their partners at Weyburn and the international test centre as well, we think has a potential to make great returns for the people of the province by developing the oil industry, and that's what that \$1 million is for.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I am quite familiar with the work of the PTRC and I just . . . I wanted to check on the \$1 million.

Mr. Minister, I have in front of me a news release entitled . . . It's dated April 28, 2003, entitled "Province's Geological Lab Expanded." Part of the news release states:

Expansion of this lab increases the province's research capacity and our ability to serve our vital oil and gas industry (according to yourself, Mr. Minister). Good research infrastructure is critical to the growth and sustainability of our oil and gas resources, which are driving our economy and creating jobs and benefits for . . . (the people of Saskatchewan).

Mr. Minister, it looks like about \$300,000 was invested in this facility recently. I wonder, Mr. Minister, could you tell us how that lab was expanded?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I'm advised that it was for a new roof, fire suppression, and reorganization of the offices.

And I want to say I visited the lab recently and it's actually an amazing place. It's on the 200 block east of Dewdney in Regina. And someone told me that it was the length of two football fields. That's pretty long.

And one of the questions I asked when I was there, actually, was . . . It's quite amazing because you go down and down and down the hallway and on either side they have the core samples that result from people drilling oil and gas wells which industry is required to give to the centre. And then people can come in and look at the core samples, examine them in order to assess whether it's possible to exploit the resource that is in the ground.

And I did ask the people when I was there whether there was protection for fire because if this collection, which goes back to the 1940s I think, of thousands and thousands and thousands of core samples which gives us a virtual geological mapping of much of the province, if we were ever to have a fire where that was lost in the sense that the cardboard containers were burned and everything was in a rubble, it would really be a major, major catastrophe really in the area of geological science.

So I was advised at the time that there was fire protection. Fire protection was part of this; having the roof repaired or fixed was another part of it; and also some organization in the office.

But I want to assure the member insofar as the office part goes,

that having visited this place, this place is not any kind of a fancy place at all. It's extremely basic; it's extremely functional. And it's a very important resource for industry, and I'm sure some researchers and academic people in the province as well.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I am aware . . . I'm aware that the provincial geological lab is doing a . . . providing a very important function to the industry. And I know that Saskatchewan has done a good job over the years of logging our core samples and actually is . . . We've actually been commended by other jurisdictions for that.

And I guess my question was, are there new capabilities added to the centre as a result of this three hundred dollar . . . thousand dollar investment, or is it just more or less a refurbishing and the fire protection?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — New capabilities — I would say, no. I would say this was really to . . . for protection. It was to protect what we have, as I've described.

And with that, Mr. Chair, I'd like to thank the members of the opposition for their very helpful questions today. And I've enjoyed our dialogue on some of these important issues.

And I also want to thank the officials that have come here today, not only for the very good job that they have done today but the very good job that they do each and every day on behalf of the Saskatchewan public.

So with that, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again. Thank you.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I as well would like to thank the officials for their help today. We always appreciate it. Thank you.

The committee reported progress.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Indian Head-Milestone on his feet?

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I raised a point of order at the conclusion of question period regarding letters that the Minister of Agriculture had quoted from. The point of order was well taken by yourself but as of yet we have not seen any letters tabled, Mr. Speaker, so I would ask that those letters be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: — The member's point is well taken.

Hon. Mr. Hugel: — Mr. Speaker, the minister yesterday made reference to some letters, quoted directly from one that will be tabled, if it has not been. I was of the impression it has been. And the second one he referred to he paraphrased; it wasn't a direct quote. But the letter that the minister quoted directly from in the House yesterday is expected to be tabled and will be.

The Speaker: — I thank both members for their clarification and their intervention.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.

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