

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today to present a petition on behalf of people who are really concerned about the high cost of education tax.

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 employers.

And the people who have signed this petition are from Wynyard, Kuroki, and Kelvington.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again this afternoon on behalf of citizens of Moose Jaw who continue to be concerned about the lack of dialysis services in their district. 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 action to provide the people of Moose Jaw and district with a hemodialysis unit for their community.

Again this afternoon the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the community of Moose Jaw and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to stand again today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills. The petition concerns the renewal of Crown grazing leases. And 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, this petition is signed by producers and constituents from the communities of Abbey and Lancer.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the 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 people all from the city of Moose Jaw.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens very concerned about the condition of Highway 47. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 47 South in order to avoid serious injury and property damage.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by people from Estevan and Swift Current.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise again with a petition from the citizens of southern Saskatchewan who are very concerned about having a limited or no access to adequate health care. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

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

I so present.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kindersley, Eston, and Plenty.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about the high cost of prescription drugs.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by all the residents from the town of Davidson.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on concern of Highway 14. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to recognize the deplorable condition of Highway 14 from Biggar to Wilkie and to take the necessary steps to reconstruct and repair this highway in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

As duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Petition is signed by people from the community of Wilkie and Landis.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present on behalf of citizens who are concerned with the condition of one of our highways. That's Highway 22, a section of that highway. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Southey, Dysart, 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 Crown land leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

those leases.

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

The signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from Hafford, Mayfair, and Rabbit Lake.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received:

A petition regarding the need for repair of Highway 14 from Biggar to Wilkie; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions nos. 12, 13, 18, 27, 35, 36, and 98.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING, SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Estimates

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Chair of the Estimates Committee, it's my pleasure to move a motion with respect to that committee. We met this morning and we reviewed the estimates for the Provincial Auditor, Ombudsman and Children's Advocate, Information and Privacy Commissioner, Conflict of Interest Commissioner, and also the Legislative Assembly.

And it's my pleasure to move, seconded by the member for Watrous:

That the fourth report of the Standing Committee on Estimates be now concurred in.

Motion agreed to.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: during the month of April, 2002, how much money did SaskEnergy spend on television ads?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have questions for subsequent months.

I also then have a question that I give notice on day no. 47 I will ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: during the month of April, 2002, how much money did SaskEnergy spend on radio ads?

And I have questions for subsequent months.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: during the month of April, 2002, how much money did SaskEnergy spend on print ads?

And again I have questions for subsequent months and I am pleased to present these questions.

The Speaker: — Order please, members.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of CIC: will the minister please provide a breakdown of the 1.6 billion in income he claims have been returned by the Crowns over the past 10 years, by year and by Crown corporation?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and all of the members of the Assembly, a group of Saskatchewan public servants who are touring the legislature and are now seated in your gallery.

The participants are employees from the departments of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization; Health; Industry and Resources; Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Community Resources and Employment; Justice; Saskatchewan Environment; and I think I spotted one from Culture, Youth and Recreation there as well.

I want to have you thank them for all their good work they do on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. And I look forward to meeting with this group after question period and ask all members to join me in welcoming them today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming the members of the public service today. I hope that you enjoy today's proceedings and I know that the Opposition House Leader and the Opposition Whip are looking forward to meeting with you after the proceedings. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Mr. Speaker, in the west gallery we have 45 grade 8 students from Lawson Heights School in my constituency here to visit. They're accompanied by teachers, Mr. McKen, Mrs. Glauser, and chaperone, Mrs. Newlove.

Lawson Heights School was started in 1980. It's located in the beautiful Saskatoon suburb of Lawson Heights. It has 287 students, 14 full-time equivalent teaching positions, and five paraprofessionals.

I will have an opportunity to meet with the students later this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. And I would ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure

to introduce a former federal colleague of mine, Mr. Allan Kerpan, who's sitting in the east gallery. He served as a Member of Parliament for two terms, both for Moose Jaw-Lake Centre and for Saskatoon Blackstrap.

Mr. Kerpan of course has a great interest in agriculture and actually sat on the floor of this House and made a presentation during a debate on the agriculture crisis, upon which the former premier, Mr. Romanow, responded that Reform Member of Parliament, Mr. Kerpan, who came before the members of this House and who so eloquently spoke on this issue and captivated the attention of everybody on that side of the House, clearly and unequivocally said we should never bargain Canada when it comes to our differences, as important as those differences are.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Kerpan is the Saskatchewan Party candidate in the Carrot River Valley constituency. And given his fine recommendation by former Premier Romanow perhaps the NDP (New Democratic Party) won't even run anyone against him.

And I'm pleased to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery are two students, Mr. Speaker. And I'll ask them to give a smile and a little wave here when I introduce them, Mr. Speaker — Doug Schmidt from Yorkton and Monica Bot from Langenburg.

These two students are spending their day with me today, Mr. Speaker, in a job shadow. We started our day this morning at 6:30, like I've said all MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) start their day, Mr. Speaker. And we were in Yorkton this morning recognizing an Earth School status. Then we're here for a briefing with the media, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). Then we attended the luncheon where there were some 750 people, Mr. Speaker, to hear the Premier speak this afternoon. And then we're meeting with a couple of groups this afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I know that they'll enjoy the proceedings in the House.

They're both students who are going on to political science degrees in the future. I expect that they'll be sitting on the floor of the legislature in a couple of years to come.

So I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming them to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I want to introduce a group of 39 grade 5 and 6 students from a town called beautiful valley — well in short form it's Beauval. And the school that they're from is the Valley View School.

And they're being accompanied here today by a number of chaperones. They're in the east gallery. The chaperones that are accompanying the students are: Anita Henry; Shirley Martin; Jenn Maurice; Richard Gauthier, who is also supposed to be a hockey player, Mr. Speaker; Fred Maurice; Mervin Morin;

Lydia Gauthier; and a dear friend of mine, Margaret Morin.

And I'll be meeting with the students after this to take a shot and also a photo at the stairs. And following that they'll be coming to my office and I'll be spending some time with the students.

I'd ask all members of the Assembly to welcome a group of grade 5 and 6 students that travelled many, many miles to come to Regina, and to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure at this time to introduce a guest who is seated in the Speaker's gallery and this is a former teacher from the Social Sciences Teachers' Institute that was held here and is being held annually, a former participant. Her name is Kim Engel. She sits on the steering committee.

Kim has with her today her parents who are also from Regina, Warren and Erika Taylor. And as their very special guests, Erika's cousin has come here to visit from Germany and I would like to introduce Hans and Erika Becker who are residents in Stuttgart, Germany. This is the first time they've ever been to Canada, the first time they've ever been on a plane. They have been also very impressed with the wide-open space on the drive from Calgary to Regina. So to Kim's family I say, guten Tag and welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Third Annual Premier's Business Luncheon

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan's business and community leaders are optimistic. I have just come from a very fulfilling and satisfying lunch with more than 700 other satisfied community leaders.

I am referring, Mr. Speaker, to the third annual Premier's business luncheon. Every table was full. There was no gloom or doom, Mr. Speaker, just optimism. Around every table were seated enthusiastic Regina leaders who came to share with the Premier his optimism, his enthusiasm for our province, and his belief that, as he said, it is our time to shine.

The Premier reminded us that our centennial is coming up and he pointed out that a visitor to our province in that year, returning for the first time in many years, will find a province completely changed, and changed for the better, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Order. There's just a little too much of a rumble here to be able to hear what is being spoken. So I would ask the member to continue and I'd ask all members to give him their attention.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier reminded us that our centennial is coming up and he pointed out that a visitor to our province in that year, returning for the first time in

many years, will find a province completely changed, and changed for the better, Mr. Speaker — a province with a new attitude, proud of our past but eager for a future, and a province with a New Democratic government.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yates: — The 21st century belongs to Saskatchewan — to borrow and to improve a phrase — a province with a completely diversified economy, a province with windmills for energy, a province with twinned highways, a province with a bright future wide open to all, Mr. Speaker, all the citizens of our province. All in all, Mr. Speaker, a very good lunch.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Moose Jaw Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, last evening I had the pleasure, along with the member from Rosetown-Biggan and the member from Humboldt, of attending the second annual MJBEX Awards for Business Excellence in Moose Jaw, put on by the Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce.

Award recipients were: for Community Involvement, Golden West Radio, that's 800 CHAB and FM Country 100; for Marketing, Chocolate Moose Fudge Factory; for Young Entrepreneur, Sterling Fitness; for Exports, Moose Jaw Sash & Door; for Customer Service, Emerald Glass; for New Business venture, Independent Medical Rehabilitation; for Business of the Year, the Brunswick Hotel; for Job Creation, the Tunnels of Moose Jaw; for Centennial Business, Moose Jaw Co-operative Association.

All 44 of the nominees, Mr. Speaker, were top-notch, well-run businesses, and all very deserving. The choices must have been extremely difficult. This impressive array of business nominees speaks well for the Moose Jaw business community and says great things for the future development of Moose Jaw.

There was also a fine meal featured, put on by the staff of the Heritage Inn, featuring a choice of entrees, beef being one of those choices. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to inform this Hon. Assembly that that's the one I chose.

Congratulations to the award recipients, nominees, and the Moose Jaw Chamber of Commerce for putting on such a classy event that is so encouraging to the private business sector in the city of Moose Jaw.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night the member for Moose Jaw North and I were very pleased to join the business community in Moose Jaw in celebrating the businesses that have truly made our present prosperous and our future wide open.

The second annual MJBEX, or Moose Jaw Business Excellence Awards banquet was once again sponsored by the Moose Jaw & District Chamber of Commerce, and it was a very fine evening of good food, fine entertainment, a few speeches, Mr. Speaker, and very deserved recognition of the businesses that have helped make our city an excellent place to live and work and visit, Mr. Speaker.

There were 27 entries in nine categories, each deserving . . . a very deserving nomination. But the award recipients were the radio station 800 CHAB for Community Involvement, the Chocolate Moose Fudge Factory for Marketing, James Sterling of the Sterling Fitness Centre was the Youth Entrepreneur, Moose Jaw Sash & Door for exceptional performance in Exports, Emerald Glass and Gallery for outstanding Customer Service, the Independent Medical Rehabilitation as the New Business venture, the Brunswick Hotel as the Business of the Year.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think a special vote of thanks goes to the people responsible for reviving and restoring this historic Moose Jaw landmark.

Also the award for Job Creation went to the Tunnels of Moose Jaw. And a special award for Centennial Business award went to the business of more than 50 years of service, the Moose Jaw Co-op Association. Congratulations to all, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Cadet Corps Ceremonial Review

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday evening, May 21, 2003, I took the opportunity to attend the 90th annual ceremonial review and anniversary parade of the 390 North Saskatchewan Regiment Cadet Corps. This ceremony was held at the Prince Albert armouries and, Mr. Speaker, none other than the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan was the reviewing officer as the cadets strutted their stuff to the hundreds in attendance.

Her Honour spoke to the cadets about pride of citizenship we should have in our great country and with the honour we should aspire to in serving Canadians in spite of calls by those who desire to diminish our armed forces.

Mr. Speaker, a multitude of cadets were recognized for their achievements during the past year — ranging from best of first-, second-, and third-year cadets to the most improved and most valuable of the non-commissioned officers. There were awards for those cadets involved, both inside and outside the cadet corps.

But there were two awards, Mr. Speaker, that all cadets most aspire to. The first is the Legion Merit of Honour and this year the medal went to Master Warrant Officer Pamela Stewart. The second medal is the Lord Strathcona Medal awarded to Warrant Officer Shawn Rogozinski.

Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a pleasure to attend this important milestone of the 390 North Saskatchewan Regiment Cadet Corps. I ask that all members join me in congratulating these young people and the honour they have brought to Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Norwegian Constitution Day

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, last Saturday was Syttende Mai, May 17, Norwegian Constitution Day. And it's my

pleasure to once again remind Saskatchewan people about this great land that's a part of our province.

Many people across the province sang this song.

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

And basically it's the very same theme as our mayor of Regina uses, which is I love Regina. This song says: I love Norway, I love Saskatchewan, and I'm part of it.

And an added feature for this year's celebration was the fact that on CBC Radio last Friday they had a phone-in show and Lindy Thorsen and Coreen Larson hosted a phone-in show which talked about how it felt to be a Norwegian in Saskatchewan. And the phones were ringing off the hook because they had so many people who wanted to celebrate what it's like to live in Saskatchewan.

There were celebrations in the province on Saturday, but basically what I want to say here is on behalf of the member from Regina Lakeview, the member from Regina Coronation Park, the member from Saskatoon Southeast, the member from Regina Sherwood, the member from Rosetown-Biggar, the member from Saltcoats, the member from Saskatchewan Rivers, and the member from Lloydminster — that all of us wish to have all the people in Saskatchewan remember that Norse Saskatchewan is a very good part of the future of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Canadian Cancer Society Recognition Award

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and members, every year the Canadian Cancer Society goes through a careful process to determine if any organization or individual is deserving of national recognition for their contribution to the mission to the Canadian Cancer Society. Each unit board office submits nomination to their provincial division office. If the provincial division office approves the nomination, it is forwarded on to the national office. The national office then determines if the nomination is worthy of an award.

This year several submissions were made to our Saskatchewan division office and one nomination was recognized at the national level.

I'm proud to announce that Melfort's Radio CJVR Ltd. was presented with the national recognition service award for their constant promotion of the Canadian Cancer Society. The local cancer society unit stated CJVR is always supportive of the work the society does and for events like daffodil sales, pancake breakfasts, and the Relay for Life.

Bill Wood, program director for CJVR-FM, said assisting the cancer society in their initiatives is never a hard decision to make. Cancer touches every family.

Mr. Speaker and members of the legislature, please join me in congratulating Radio CJVR Ltd. for receiving this award, and also in thanking them for their contribution to the fight against cancer.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Emergency Medical Services Week

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recognizing Emergency Medical Services Week, I join with my colleagues to commend all EMS (emergency medical services) personnel for playing a vital role in our health care system and for working to improve services that are delivered over a vast geographic area.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that Saskatchewan people, no matter where they live, receive high-quality health care services and that is why one of the key goals of the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care is to ensure a minimum of one emergency medical technician on every emergency call so that patients can receive a high level of care the moment that that help arrives.

To help us achieve the goal we have implemented the emergency medical technician training initiative. Fifty-seven emergency medical responders are benefiting from this initiative to upgrade and improve their emergency skills: 26 students are training in part-time sessions in the communities of Macklin and Watrous; 15 emergency medical responders received \$2,500 bursaries to attend a full-time training program; and arrangements are in place for 16 EMRs (emergency medical responder) in the Keewatin Yatthé Regional Health Authority to advance their skills to an EMT (emergency medical technician) basic level.

Mr. Speaker, EMS providers work to ensure quality care and minimize response times for those who are requiring care. It is work that reflects the top priority of our government to provide the people of this province with the most accessible, best quality health care possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Minister of Agriculture. The investigation into one case of BSE confirmed in a beef cow in Alberta that is well underway, and so far all indications are that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is proceeding swiftly.

However the temporary ban on imports of beef cattle and beef products from Canada imposed by the United States is of concern to Canadian and the Saskatchewan cattle industry. It is hoped that this one case of BSE will be isolated and that that ban can be lifted quickly.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the Assembly what conditions the United States is indicating must be met by Canada in order for the US (United States) to lift this ban and how long it may take to meet those conditions?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is a very important question that the Leader of the Opposition asks.

This morning I had a conversation with Minister Vanclief who is in daily contact, he tells me, with Ann Veneman, who is the minister responsible for the agriculture in the United States.

What Ms. Veneman has said, and this is third hand or second hand to what Mr. Vanclief said to me this morning, is that what the United States wants is an assurance that we have completed our trace-back fully, that we can assure not only Canadians but the international community that we have captured the animal that in fact has the BSE, and that we have under control now all of the issues related to the BSE within Canada.

The agency responsible that is now overseeing the investigation, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, has moved swiftly over the last four days. We are still assured that we are only dealing now with . . . still with one animal. There are parallel fronts that are proceeding with the examination of the offspring of the animal, as well as searching for now the dam of the cow who in fact had the BSE. So we are expecting to know in the next couple of days.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the minister for the answer. It's our understanding from the technical briefing this morning that there are now two beef herds in Saskatchewan that are under quarantine in relation to this case. Now this, of course, also is a concern for these individual farms and for the Saskatchewan industry as a whole.

Now that there are Saskatchewan links to the infected animal, I am sure that Saskatchewan Agriculture officials are much more involved in the investigation than they were at this time yesterday. And as the minister explained in his first answer, that the trace-back is so important, we would ask the minister to explain specifically how our provincial Department of Agriculture and its available resources are now participating in the investigation into this BSE case.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our officials have been engaged in the, not in the direct investigation, but have been engaged on a daily basis with CFIA (Canada Food Inspection Agency) through a national conference call that happens every morning at about 8 o'clock our time, Saskatchewan time. And this is a national conference call that the CFIA conduct.

We have, in Saskatchewan, now in place, and had it in place now for a better part of two days, our own internal team of people. We have two people who have Ph.D.s who work within the department. They're specialists in the area of animal husbandry.

We have also an industry committee that I established two days ago that is meeting, as we speak, today to provide both advice and recommendation in terms of how we'll deal with a number of issues as they relate to, I say compensation, as people are asking, and how we deal with the expedience in the future on issues of this magnitude.

As well as, Mr. Speaker, I have been ensured from the federal government, Mr. Vanclief, this morning, that we'll have each day the regional director from CFIA on our conference calls with the media and with Saskatchewan producers to ensure that we're all connected and know what is happening every day, minute by minute, as this case develops.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture mentioned that he had established an industry advisory group to advise him during this period on the investigation into the BSE case. My understanding is that the minister has officially named this group and that the people involved may actually have met as early as this morning.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell us what issues he hopes that this group will advise him on, how often they will be meeting in the upcoming days and weeks, and if they have provided any direction to him as a result of their initial meeting this morning?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will provide a list of the individuals for the Leader of the Opposition — I neglected to do that. We'll provide that for him, Mr. Speaker.

There are nine individuals who are serving on this committee. Their job will be two or threefold initially. What we want them to do is first of all provide some examination of the process that we're using today because it was the Canadian cattle feeder association and the industry that's really developed the tracking system for Canada. And we want to know from them what we can do to expedite this process in a more significant fashion into the future. So an examination of what we're doing today will be important.

Secondly will be recommendations that we'll want them to make around issues that are raised with Mr. Vanclief this morning — for example, on compensation, if we're going to be . . . And the federal minister says there will be compensation. To whom should that occur, to what degree should it occur, and what should the timing of that be around compensation?

And thirdly, we'll want to have this committee also involved in giving us recommendations on how we fund in the future the pillar called food safety. Because as you know, in the agricultural policy framework which the federal government is now asking us to sign, there is a pillar there that attaches itself to food safety. And I want this committee to provide some recommendation to me in terms of what level of support needs to go . . . to be put into this particular pillar, and at what level should there be participation from both provincial and federal contributions.

So those are basically the areas, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are many, many angles to this story and it's certainly consuming a lot of interest here in Canada and beyond. And as the minister

mentioned, public . . . the safety of our food is of paramount importance.

There are also some concerns being raised in the media of a link between BSE in cattle and chronic wasting disease, which has been found in the domestic game farm industry and the wild deer.

Mr. Speaker, we believe that there is no reason whatsoever to suspect that the disease can be transmitted between elk or deer and beef cattle; and the minister's official confirmed that in a news conference yesterday. So my question to the minister is: what is his official response to those who in the media and otherwise would link the issue of BSE to chronic wasting disease? Does the government have an official response on that issue?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by my scientific staff that there is no association here or no transmittal of association here between BSE and chronic wasting. And my officials have said this both publicly and have for some years now, given that we had the chronic wasting issue in this province for some time and there's always been a concern that there may be a linkage here between the elk industry and the beef industry. And we've always said now for many years that there is no linkage here in terms of the transmittal of the disease. And my officials are continuing to say that.

The scientific community that's reporting on this from CFIA have assured us that this is the case. CFIA has been in this province for many years now, helping us with the examination in the elk industry with chronic wasting and with eradication of the disease and also with the putting down of animals in the past.

So the official position is that there are no linkages here between the beef industry and the elk industry with these two different diseases.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Application to Labour Relations Board

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister responsible for SaskPower. On May 7, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers applied to the Labour Relations Board for an order to move some employees who are currently members of a chemical, electrical and paperworkers union into the IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers). And in that regard, the opposition has no concerns about the application.

However, the IBEW application also calls for the Labour Relations Board to force the unionization of about 500 SaskPower managers, supervisors, consultants, and engineers. Mr. Speaker, does the minister and his NDP government support the IBEW's demand for forced unionization of 500 more SaskPower employees?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As

the member opposite will know and the Saskatchewan Party Labour critic will know, the Labour Relations Board is a quasi-judicial board that is established arm's-length from the government. It is established under and administers The Trade Union Act. The board is neutral. It's an adjudicator of disputes that arise under the Act.

And as there is a case before the LRB (Labour Relations Board), Mr. Speaker, it's really inappropriate that I comment on that specifically.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the effect of the IBEW application, if the Labour Relations Board approves it, is that virtually every single employee at SaskPower would be unionized with the exception of the president, vice-president, and a handful of senior managers and executive support staff. In fact the IBEW's application calls for the unionization of all but 48 SaskPower employees.

Mr. Speaker, SaskPower employs 2,350 people across Saskatchewan and serves over 400,000 businesses. Families and business in Saskatchewan depend on SaskPower keeping the power on. Will the minister advise the legislature and the people of Saskatchewan on how the government would ensure the power would stay on to over 400,000 customers in the event that the IBEW calls for a strike when SaskPower has 48 people left out of the union? How can you guarantee power to the rest of the province?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, this is an application before the Labour Relations Board that deals with the definition of employee. It is not, it is not an application for certification or decertification. And, Mr. Speaker, there is no concern that there . . . this may end in an eventual work stoppage of any kind.

So I would say to the Saskatchewan Party, you're fishing here. They're fishing, Mr. Speaker, because there's no possibility that that will come to pass.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, it's a responsibility of the Government of Saskatchewan to ensure that the province has a reliable and continuous supply of power, and SaskPower's 2,350 employees do an excellent job ensuring that.

But if the IBEW's application to the Labour Relations Board is successful in forcing over 500 more SaskPower employees into their union, how can this government guarantee a continuous supply of power in the event that the IBEW go on strike? They went on strike a couple, three years ago, Mr. Speaker, and the management of SaskPower kept power on for the province. How can this minister guarantee that would happen again when they only leave 48 employees left in SaskPower that aren't in the union?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Well, Mr. Speaker, for the Saskatchewan Party's information, this application has nothing to do with the withdrawal of essential services or services of any kind. It's an

application that deals with the scope and the definition of employee.

And, Mr. Speaker, here again we have another case — the Labour Relations Board which is independent from government, and the member opposite wants us to meddle in it. Just like the member from Rosthern criticizes the justice system, just like the Leader of the Opposition wanted the Premier to get involved in a case with the Justice department last year. Mr. Speaker, they have no respect for the processes that are in place. And, Mr. Speaker, this government does.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SaskTel Investments

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation) or his designate.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP often tells us that we in opposition should pay attention to what the bond rating agencies are saying. Well here's what the Dominion Bond Rating agency has said yesterday about SaskTel.

According to DBRS (Dominion Bond Rating Service Limited), SaskTel's key challenges are its lack of size and quote, its “. . . funding of non-core investments.” That's what the bond rating agency said about SaskTel.

One of those non-core investments is SaskTel's *Max* TV which we learned last week cost at least \$21 million and has garnered only 5,000 customers.

Now last week the minister made some assurances that there would be no more capital dollars, taxpayers' dollars, spent in developing this system at SaskTel. But, Mr. Speaker, that's not what the Dominion Bond Rating agency is saying today. The Dominion Bond Rating agency is saying that indeed SaskTel will be spending more capital dollars on SaskTel *Max*.

So would somebody over there answer the question: who's telling the truth, the Dominion Bond Rating agency or the minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of CIC, and as Vice-Chair of the Crown Investments Corporation, I'm very happy to step into this debate and deal with some of the questions that come from that member.

What we've learned over many years, the years I was the minister, the years that the present minister is the minister, is that we have to check the facts. And we are going to go and check the facts from that member about these various issues.

But what we do know is that Saskatchewan people want us to provide services across this province at the high quality of service, the high standards that all of us come to expect. And to do that, you end up having to invest money in what we have in this province. You also end up having to provide those services in a broader way. And we're going to continue to do that

because that's what Saskatchewan people want.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can provide the minister's designate some information right here and now about what the Dominion Bond Rating agency is saying about SaskTel and this rating agency's concern about their non-core investments, Mr. Speaker.

Here's what they're saying, and I quote:

SaskTel is expected to spend over \$280 million in capital expenditure in 2003, used primarily to roll out expanded data wireless services . . . video services, (Mr. Speaker, presumably *Max* TV, and) increased wireless and broadband . . .

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, somebody at SaskTel has told the Dominion Bond Rating agency that some of the \$280 million in capital expenditures this year is going to go to the video services or SaskTel *Max*.

Last week the minister left a clear impression that there would be no more capital dollars, no more tax dollars spent in developing this money-losing cable TV offering. The question is simple: who is telling the truth — the person at SaskTel that told this to the Dominion Bond Rating agency or the minister of the Crown?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, SaskTel has a long record of investing dollars in Saskatchewan and outside of Saskatchewan that provide a return to the Saskatchewan people.

But the biggest return that SaskTel provides to all of us in Saskatchewan is that they provide good service at some of the highest quality in the world, and they do it at a rate that's a reasonable price for all of us.

Does that member not want SaskTel to spend money in his community of Swift Current? Or the other members, do they not want SaskTel to be spending money in this province?

I think that what we . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan want a strong SaskTel. They absolutely reject the position of the Saskatchewan Party which is to somehow cut off the limbs or cut off the strength of that corporation. The people of Saskatchewan want a strong corporation that will provide service for the long term.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the minister asks a good rhetorical question. He says, does the member not want SaskTel to invest in his community. That is precisely the

point, Mr. Speaker.

The members on this side of the House, and more importantly customers of SaskTel, people across the province, want SaskTel to focus on this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Not, Mr. Speaker, in Australia, not in Georgia, and not in Tennessee. That's what they want, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Dominion Bond Rating Service also provided a bleak assessment of our economy. They say, after 12 years of NDP . . .

The Speaker: — Members would allow the question to be put, please.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The DBRS also says, that after 12 years of NDP government we're left with, quote, "negative GDP, negative population growth, and weak per capita income."

And ironically, the DBRS says the NDP's dismal economic record is good for SaskTel because no other business will want to come and invest and compete against them, Mr. Speaker. That's what the report says.

Mr. Speaker, the 2003 earnings at SaskTel will be down as much as \$20 million according to this bond rating agency. So once again we ask the minister or his designate, how much more money is the NDP going to gamble on this money-losing SaskTel *Max* TV venture?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — You know, Mr. Speaker, we just came from a meeting with over 700 business people in downtown Regina and what were they saying? They were saying that things are positive in Regina, positive in Saskatoon, and positive all across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — In case the opposition missed it, Mr. Speaker, for 12 straight months in a row there's been job growth in Saskatchewan and today we have 12,900 more jobs than we did a year ago, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan just finished leading the country in the growth of retail sales. Jobs are up; sales are up; oil and gas drilling up 72 per cent more than last year, Mr. Speaker. And there's only one group that could see doom and gloom in the good things happening in Saskatchewan, and they're sitting right over there, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if things are so good for the governing party, if things are so good for the NDP, why in the world won't they screw up their courage and call a general election in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, why won't, why won't that minister whisper in the Premier's ear and tell him all this good stuff so that we can go to the polls? The reason, Mr. Speaker, is clear. They know that the people of Saskatchewan are just waiting for the chance to kick them out of office, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The people of Saskatchewan, they are tired of SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company), Mr. Speaker. They are tired of a \$107 million land titles fiasco. They are tired of waiting lists in health care, Mr. Speaker. They want a general election in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that minister has not come close to the question. This SaskTel *Max* cable offering, another boondoggle of the NDP it looks like, has cost \$21 million. It's garnered only 5,000 more customers. How much more money, how many more taxpayers' dollars will they waste on this project?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the people in the province will have an opportunity to go to the polls, and the Saskatchewan Party will have an opportunity to go to the people, as will this party over here. But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I predict that when the people look at the job numbers being up 13,000 over a year ago, when they look at Saskatchewan having a growing labour force, when they look at 5,700 more young people working than a year ago, when they look at record housing starts, when they look at record retail sales, Mr. Speaker, they will conclude that you cannot build a future, Mr. Speaker, by trying to tear everything down that is good in the province of Saskatchewan.

You cannot inspire people and have hope and optimists, Mr. Speaker, if all you ever do is create negativity and complain. You cannot do that, Mr. Speaker. And I would quite confidently predict that when the people of Saskatchewan compare the record of this government and how the economy is on a roll, with the constant negativity and complaining of the people over there, Mr. Speaker, they will opt for the positive vision of this government and this government will be returned, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, we'd like to know what the weather is like in the world that that minister is living in, Mr. Speaker, because in the next election what people will remember is 16 consecutive quarters of population loss. They'll remember scandal after scandal after scandal. They'll remember \$85 million lost in out-of-province investments in the province of Saskatchewan. They'll remember hospital closures and waiting lists. And that's why they won't call an election, Mr. Speaker, that's why they're desperately hanging on to power.

Mr. Speaker, the Dominion Bond Rating Service report also says that SaskTel will run a cash flow deficit of over . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Before we have a response we have to hear the question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Dominion Bond Rating agency says the reason for the \$100 million cash flow deficit at SaskTel is because of the need to fund the NDP's money-losing, non-core investments around the world and an \$85 million dividend payment from SaskTel to the NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that SaskTel intends to run this \$100 million cash flow deficit in 2003 and will the minister confirm that that cash flow will be covered by debt in order for SaskTel to make its dividend payment to the General Revenue Fund?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I know it will come as a surprise to the opposition to know this, but I want them to know that SaskTel is actually one of the telecommunications company in Canada that is doing well. Other telecommunications are not doing very well.

And I want them to know also, Mr. Speaker, that the people of this province support and value SaskTel. And the people of the province do not want to pursue the agenda of the opposition party, which is to privatize SaskTel. They do not want that, Mr. Speaker.

And I just want to quote Clive Beddoe, who is the president of WestJet. And this is what he had to say, Mr. Speaker, about the Premier's Wide Open Future campaign. He said this — and I think the opposition should take note — he said:

You do not do those things (that is good things) with the right energy or enthusiasm if you do not have the right attitude to start off with. If you start off with a defeatist attitude it is not going to work. He (the Premier) is absolutely right to focus on the positive and not the negative.

And I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, to the opposition, there is a song that they should learn. And it says: accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative. And if they don't do that, Mr. Speaker, they're all going to be eliminated in the next election.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's very hard to hear myself speak at the moment, but I am very pleased to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions numbered 291 through 294 inclusive, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Questions 291, 292, 293, and 294 have been submitted.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable questions 295 and 296, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Converted to orders for return (debatable)

questions 295 and 296.

Order, please. I wonder . . . Order, please. Order, please. There's a member on each of the front benches here . . . Order, please. Order, please.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand today and respond to written questions no. 297 through 301 inclusive, Mr. Speaker.

Unlike the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, we believe in answering the majority if not all the questions.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 297, 298, 299, 300, and 301 have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 23

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 23 — The Cities Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to be able to speak on The Cities Amendment Act, 2003.

Mr. Speaker, there's plenty of changes to an Act that's barely a year old. And for a government that's been in office for over a decade and has passed hundreds of pieces of legislation one would think that this government would be able to get the original Act done right the first time.

Obviously once the Act was actually put in place then it became clear that there were many errors in the Act and some omissions that . . . and some changes that were required. And, Mr. Speaker, now that brings us to this year, and an amendment to the Act.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments encompass a number of errors regarding The Cities Act, so anything that allows the cities more autonomy and increased flexibility when it comes to running their own affairs is of course a good thing.

These amendments were also requested by the cities themselves and that SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipality Association) was also involved in the ongoing discussions. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the overall intent of this piece of legislation is to bring it in line with other pieces of municipal legislation.

While some of the amendments being introduced with this Bill are strictly of housekeeping nature, there are a few that are a cause of concern. Notably these amendments are also included in other Acts and we're not entirely comfortable with the members opposite unilaterally making broad, sweeping changes.

(14:30)

Amendments that deal with reducing provincial involvement in the governance of the cities where there's no overriding provincial interest should be seen as a commitment from this government that it will keep its collective nose out of the cities' business, whatever or whenever that may be possible

Anything that provides for a more modern approach to local government and takes steps to ensure more accountable government are also positive and we are encouraged by the direction of the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, those amendments in the legislation that deal with assessment are the ones that concern us most on this side of the House. While a simple word change here or there might not seem like much to the average person, when it comes to legislation this would make a world of difference, especially to those who will be on the receiving end of the legislation in question.

There is an amendment, Mr. Speaker, that deals with the phase-in period for assessment. This is where some clarification will be required because, according to the amendments, phase-in periods won't extend beyond a single reassessment cycle which is every four years. We know that some communities have phase-in periods that are longer than four years.

So we're wondering if the members opposite have even considered this or did they simply decide to ignore it. Whatever the case, it is an issue that's being flagged.

The amendments also talk about a sales verification form that is supposedly currently being developed by SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency). This form will be used to notify assessors and the agency when the property is sold. According to the minister, these sales verification forms will be helpful in collecting information on property sale transactions and will also assist in keeping the assessment system up to date.

If the NDP's assessment system is anything like ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan), the computerized land titles system, the people of the province can expect more money-losing black hole that won't work and can't be sold.

Another amendment in this legislation, Mr. Speaker, deals with the implementation of a simplified appeals process. This will supposedly be an alternate to the current appeals process which can be time-consuming and inefficient. There are certain criteria that must be met first of course, but the members on this side of the House will be very interested to see just how successful this will be.

Overall we're encouraged to see that a significant discussion and consultation did occur prior to these changes being brought in. And in light of that, Mr. Speaker, we feel that any concerns that may come up can be addressed in Committee of the Whole. So I'd like to let it go to Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker.

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

Bill No. 24

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 24 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to make a few comments about Bill No. 24 here. It's a Bill, Mr. Speaker, that directly affects northern municipalities in our province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Bill at first blush seems to be more of a housekeeping nature. There are many changes being brought to The Cities Act of a housekeeping nature, and of course the member from Redberry Lake has just spoke about that, Mr. Speaker.

It seems as though in the past few years that some of the issues were overlooked in the readjustment of some Acts that were being done by the NDP government, and they missed a few things and they're just trying to play a little catch-up here. And certainly it's time that these things were taken care of.

But we're just kind of curious on this side why the government, Mr. Speaker, could not have spent the appropriate amount of time to make sure that these Acts were drawn up appropriately rather than waiting till late in the session and always having to seem to be in a scramble.

We're into late May now, Mr. Speaker, and we're just starting to look at a few Bills here. And we understand that they may be running out of Bills to bring, but why would you wait until so late in the session, Mr. Speaker, to be bringing Bills forward that are rather important, especially to municipalities, Mr. Speaker, in this province.

Certainly we notice in this Bill, as we've noticed in other Bills in regards to municipalities, Mr. Speaker, that there's going to be a form developed by SAMA to help them with property sales transactions, Mr. Speaker, as they try to become more effective and efficient — which we certainly want to applaud because we've been certainly waiting for some time for SAMA to become effective and efficient.

But apparently they need a sales verification form so that they have an idea what property is worth and what property is selling for in this province. We're wondering though, Mr. Speaker, why — on this side of the House — why this information could not be got from ISC. But apparently . . . Of course we know on this side of the House the problems that ISC is having.

And so SAMA is having to go out on their own and creating a duplication of services. And we're quite distraught with that, because as you know, Mr. Speaker, every time a service is duplicated, certainly what happens is that the cost of doing business in this province goes up.

One of the things we found quite curious in this Act, and we're finding it in other Acts too, but most curious in this northern municipal Act, Mr. Speaker, is that there were some unproclaimed amendments brought forward by this NDP government dating back, Mr. Speaker, quite some time; back to

the early part of their mandate in the early '90s where changes were brought to The Northern Municipalities Act and specific clauses were not proclaimed, Mr. Speaker.

And of course as we know on this side of the House, this government is quite famous for not proclaiming certain Bills. And all we have to do is look back to the 1970s when the former premier, Allan Blakeney, through that period of 11 years had quite an extensive amount of Bills that were passed and a multitude of them that were never proclaimed and have not been proclaimed, Mr. Speaker, to this date.

And that's something we're going to have to talk to the minister about, Mr. Speaker, is why these amendments were brought forward previously, in previous years; why they decided not to proclaim them; why they're being repealed now. We want to have a very serious discussion with the minister in Committee of the Whole on these issues, Mr. Speaker.

But I guess one of the ones we're most curious about is that there is a clause in here, Mr. Speaker, in this Bill, Bill No. 24, clause no. 10 — it talks about an existing provision from an Act that was changed in 1995. The Act was to be changed in 1995, was to be repealed, there was a clause that was to be repealed. And now the repealed is being repealed. And so then does that mean that we are going back to the previous provision prior to 1995?

And it's those kinds of questions that we're going to want to be asking, Mr. Speaker.

But I guess what we're going to want to need to know from the minister, Mr. Speaker, is the consultation process that took place.

Certainly the people in northern Saskatchewan have talked to the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, loud and clear about the consultation that does or does not take place in northern Saskatchewan. And we know the Department of Northern Affairs is supposed to be leading the charge to ensure that consultation appropriately takes place in northern Saskatchewan.

But what we often find, Mr. Speaker, is that it's not so much consultation takes place, but simply a meeting is held. The attendees are informed of some problems that are dealing with the northern municipal legislation and it's simply left at that. And then they're left in the dark and in the wilderness, so to speak, Mr. Speaker, as to what kind of changes this NDP government may be hoisting upon them. And it's this kind of an attitude that people of northern Saskatchewan are most alarmed about, Mr. Speaker.

And we know that in the upcoming provincial election . . . And we were certainly hoping on this side of the House it would have been called last week, Mr. Speaker. And all the members, even the member from Swift Current was quite prepared to go to the polls and defend his record.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that what is happening here is that this government needs to take charge rather than just bringing amendments of such a minor . . . They need, with an election coming, they needed to set direction for

this province. We don't see it happening. It's time to call an election.

And most appropriately, Mr. Speaker, is that it's time . . . We need to have this Bill dealt with between ourselves and the minister most appropriately in Committee of the Whole.

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

Bill No. 40

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 40 — The Rural Municipality Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, giving me the opportunity to speak to Bill No. 40, the amendment to the rural municipal Act. It's always important to take a look at the changes that go into . . . of these Acts.

The Acts are very important in the sense of how the municipalities can function and the duties they will provide, through the services that they need to implement for the taxpayers of those municipalities as well. And it becomes very essential that the changes to the Act become very transparent in the sense of how that service can be provided as well.

And I guess when you see when some of the changes come through with the property tax phase-in from a six-year to a four-year system, it's one of the question areas that needs to be looked at a little bit closer in the sense of the need of having that period of time that's being proposed.

The rural municipalities — you're even looking at an expanded period of time that should be recognized for their needs in the sense of that reassessment period that goes on in there. There's lots of opportunity for the land base to stay pretty neutral over that period of time and not a whole lot of change that happens in property in that sense as well. So for the shortening up of that period of time it sometimes becomes somewhat questionable of the need of that.

It does speak to the fact of bringing it into the same time lapse between the reassessment periods. But I think that's that whole question of reassessment, if the need of a four-year reassessment period is actually needed to that whole process as well. So that phasing in of that period of time . . . or is that period of time even valuable in the sense of the four-year period that's being asked for in that respect as well?

Also the sales verification amendment that's being requested for SAMA — and I know SAMA's been a real hot topic and issue in that whole reassessment process that's gone on — and sales verification has always been a huge issue in the sense of being able to identify the number of sales and adequate sales that are needed for that reassessment of property and establishing value as such as well.

And I think without knowing how those verification forms are going to be put into place, the type of information and data that's required on those actual forms, and how that whole

process is going to come together, we need to understand that, I think, to a greater extent and have a better feel for how that whole application form or verification form is going to be processed and the information that's actually required to be placed on there. And whose responsibilities are going to be upheld there, if it's going to be the property owners or if it's going to be the municipality themselves that need to deal with that verification of sales and the data that flows through there as well in that regards.

I think there's one good amendment that's proposed in Bill 40, is the timing of elections and the timing of putting councils into place. Where councils weren't sworn in till the first of January of the upcoming year or the following year, which gave the existing council — that really wasn't the choice of the taxpayer, of the voter of the day — still sitting and having authority of making some decisions and spending some dollars in the period of time until the year was lapsed.

I think this is a good amendment and this will give the councils the opportunity to start doing business as soon as they're brought into the authority of sitting as council through the swearing-in period that can be held immediately thereafter their elections.

Also, I think working with the amendment to giving the authority and power to the councils to make some decision in the sense of where the road routing is going to take place, where the transportation routes are going to go, the weighting of the roads as such, it's just good management to have that ability there with those municipalities and those councils to be able to set some direction in the sense of where they're going to want to take their municipality and how they can work with adjoining municipalities in the sense of traffic flow.

And traffic flow becomes very critical with the change of environment and economic development in rural Saskatchewan, as well as that whole ag industry — what's happening with the development of inland terminals and with the hog barns and with the livestock industry. We're needing to recognize the traffic-flow patterns and how they're going to be addressed, and the municipalities are the ones that understand where that traffic flow is going to partake, and also they understand where these industries are going to be established within the municipalities so it gives them the opportunity to do some planning, and into the future as well, as where their road systems are going to be implemented. And I . . . we really feel that that's a benefit for the municipalities.

(14:45)

I guess to what authority and what powers the municipalities are given, that still needs to be of clarification. And I think we need to ask some more questions there and we need to identify to the fullest extent where we're going to be going with that authority as well. So it's a good move in direction, but I think we need some better clarification of how that's going to be implemented at the end of the day.

The framework for fire-protection services is very critical. It's an area that needs to be developed; it's an area that needs to be addressed. We need good clarification on how that's going to happen, how we're going to work with adjoining municipalities,

how 911 is going to take effect in the sense of this framework of providing the firefighting services as well. We need to understand, I guess, how the whole tie-in is going to work there.

It's a good direction that we're going with the proposal amendment, but again I think there needs to be some work and some more questions asked in the sense of what's going to happen with that service and how that whole framework is going to be structured to that degree as well in that respect.

At this point I would just like to move this debate to . . . Nope, we're going to adjourn it. We're going to move to adjourn this debate for further discussion that we're going to have on these concerned issues. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 41

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 41 — The Urban Municipality Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to enter into the debate, second reading debate, on Bill 41 in the legislature today.

The amendments that the Bill makes to The Urban Municipality Act in the province are for the most part housekeeping, Mr. Speaker, and they do underscore however — the changes do — they do underscore some interesting developments in the province of Saskatchewan of late with respect to the urban municipalities Act and urban legislation.

I think it was just last year that The Cities Act was passed in this legislature, supported I would point out, Mr. Speaker, by the opposition. And as a result of that, cities really now have their own legislation and are being administered, and are administering themselves perhaps is a better way to characterize it, under that new piece of legislation.

It still leaves many other municipalities in the province of Saskatchewan who then are governed under the urban municipalities Act — smaller towns and villages and the like. And so, Mr. Speaker, it's important then for the language to be correct in the new Act in light of the creation of The Cities Act. This one seeks to take out references to cities because the cities have their own legislation.

And that's an example of the kind of housekeeping that's being done by this piece of legislation.

There are also some more substantive changes that the Bill makes, Mr. Speaker, not the least of which is what is something that the minister refers to as municipal restructuring or how most people would refer to as voluntary amalgamations. Some amendments in the Bill deals with that issue and does afford municipalities some flexibility in that regard.

And again, those are probably positive and worthwhile constructive changes to be made, and a clear departure from the path and the tack that this same government took not more than

two years ago when it sought to force the amalgamation of municipalities rather than encourage or allow for the voluntary amalgamation. In that case, municipalities rose up across the province in opposition, led by the current member for Saltcoats and the future member for Melville-Saltcoats, Mr. Speaker, who led the charge to ensure that . . . led the charge to ensure that the government would change its mind about forced amalgamation.

And to the government's credit, it changed its mind. Every now and then, Mr. Speaker, the blind squirrel finds a nut and it changes its mind and it does the right thing. It did it on forced amalgamation. It did it then and it also did it, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the increasing of nursing home fees, if you recall that, just last year.

So this particular piece of legislation, Bill No. 41 — and the minister, the minister I'm sure will agree, the minister I'm sure will agree — seeks to afford municipalities the flexibility to pursue a voluntary amalgamation or some sort of restructuring, something for the most part that's accepted both by municipalities, by the government, and indeed by the opposition here in the Legislative Assembly as well, Mr. Speaker.

There are also some significant amendments to the proposed legislation to address and simplify the appeals process as regards the property assessment issue. And this too is welcome, Mr. Speaker. This too is a positive development here in the province of Saskatchewan. Bill No. 41 recognizes, I think, the fact that the process can be rather tedious. The appeal process can be tedious and time consuming and it seeks to streamline that appeal process.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we also note here that this legislation also repealed some previously unproclaimed legislation from previous years that has since been ruled as obsolete or no longer applicable which also, of course, would be characterized as a housekeeping change but important nonetheless. Seemingly unnecessary though, you would think, because of the number of times we see this particular NDP government have to go back and repeal unproclaimed pieces of legislation.

And for those who might be watching and wondering what is an unproclaimed piece of legislation, today, Mr. Speaker, it's important that residents and taxpayers of the province know that no matter what happens in this legislature, no matter of the debate that occurs in this legislature, the laws that are debated and the laws that are passed — including Bill 41 — don't become the law of the land, the law of Saskatchewan, until they are proclaimed and that proclamation happens at the will of the government.

So if you can believe it, Mr. Speaker, what happens too often with the NDP government — and it's happening in this case in Bill 41 — is they'll introduce legislation. They'll shepherd it through the Assembly. They'll get the legislation passed — sometimes with the support of the opposition and sometimes we don't support the legislation, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes some members of the opposition support it and some do not — either way they get their will because they have the most number of seats in here and they pass the legislation.

And then, Mr. Speaker, if you can believe it, parts of that legislation that the NDP worked so hard to get passed kind of

just sort of hang on the books because they're not proclaimed. They're not proclaimed. They don't become the law of the land.

And Bill 41 now has to go back and repeal, repeal those unproclaimed pieces of previous legislation because, Mr. Speaker, the NDP couldn't get it right the first time.

So we know that the Bill does some important things. It deals with issues like the property assessment appeal. It affords municipalities the opportunity to look at what the minister refers to as municipal restructuring and what most other people would call voluntary amalgamation, gives them some flexibility in that regard, and then it takes care of some housekeeping amendments.

And a number of my colleagues have had a chance to speak to this particular piece of legislation and it's why, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to see this move on to Committee of the Whole where the critics and members of this side of the House do have some specific questions as to how this will impact municipal property taxpayers in the province and how they can expect a simplified assessment appeal system.

So I would conclude my remarks, Mr. Speaker, with an indication that at this time the opposition is prepared to see this Bill move into committee for further scrutiny.

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

Bill No. 39

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Osika that **Bill No. 39 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to get to my feet and speak, make a few comments on Bill No. 39, the municipal revenue-sharing piece of legislation, which is a very interesting piece of legislation.

I kind of reflect back to when the budget was announced, and there was quite a bit of dissatisfaction with the mayors and councillors and quite a few people that this would affect — the towns, villages throughout the province.

I think they were expecting probably more money coming from the government on this Bill because I think at the SUMA convention they had the feeling that with the feel-good speeches that were made by the Premier and the member from Melville, Municipal Affairs minister, that there would be more revenue-sharing money coming down the pipes and they were quite disappointed in it as I know out in Arm River they are, as I know up in Regina they are.

A lot of these towns, villages, cities are facing increased costs with . . . One of them is water quality as the rules and regulations change. And I mean, and we agree in this House, that there should be regulations being brought forth on the water quality; it's a very important issue.

But when you bring forth regulations like that, making towns on

. . . That have to adjust their water systems, water treatment plants, comes with a very added cost, a very expensive cost that the towns and villages and cities are finding very hard to go back to their local taxpayers time and time again.

Now over the years — probably the last ten years if I believe right — if you check the figures that this government has been cutting . . . has been making cutbacks to revenue sharing through the '90s, and the towns there or villages tightened up their belts way back then and thought it would be just for a few years. And they always figured that next year the government would be giving more money, and more money would be coming to help them with their projects that they'd been putting off.

I have a number of towns that have been putting water treatment plants on hold for a number of years hoping that the money would be coming next year. But it's always next year, Mr. Speaker, and it's getting very frustrating for the towns and villages out there. They need to make changes, and it's not only to their water system, water treatment plants, it's the rules and regulations on landfills that they have to spend money on. And there is only so much money out there with the taxpayers. And the mill rates have been going up.

And it shows here in the city of Regina there. I believe the council here had a very tough time with their budget. It was a very long-drawn-out process on it dealing with the money that was coming in, and still trying to provide the services to their citizens. And they were looking for some additional help from this government and believe they didn't get it, Mr. Speaker. So they're hoping, they're hoping, Mr. Speaker, the more time will be coming, more money will be coming down the pipes.

I know some of the members are hollering from the other side, so I guess that they would agree that next year that the money should be cut back. Is that what they're saying from the other side? That they gave them too much money this year? I'm not sure. I can hear some hollering but I can't pick out exactly what they're saying on that.

But with that, Mr. Speaker, this is a pertinent piece of legislation that should be dealt with, I think, with more serious consideration, with more money coming — the revenue sharing that has been taken from the towns, villages, and the cities here, as the taxes are going up throughout most of the province of Saskatchewan on the share when it comes to their tax revenue end of it. The towns first of all look at what's coming down the pipes and they have to do their budgeting, as each town does.

And I know most towns in my constituency had a very tough time at budget time this time, just basically trying to maintain the services they've got. That's not even updating the roads and their water systems and their water quality treatment plants and their landfills and all the other programs that they would like to initiate. One of them is recreation grants that have been cut back over numerous years by this government.

Now they're also dealt with added costs of some of the towns are looking at trying to spray for mosquitoes with the threat of West Nile disease. They've been looking for more help from the government at that end. And I know that government help is only coming up to, I think, towns that, if you have 2,000 people

or more, which basically I don't think I have a town in my constituency that has more than 2,000 people in it. So they basically have no support there when it comes to fighting West Nile disease unless they, all my towns in my constituency, all go together and apply for one grant.

(15:00)

So it's very frustrating for them and I think it was vented that day, on budget day, if I remember right. There was numerous quotes I could bring out from the mayors of Saskatoon and Regina and Prince Albert and some of the other smaller cities that were quite disappointed in what was given for the revenue sharing. They were led to believe, Mr. Speaker, that it would be higher, there would be more help and more support from this government, which unfortunately has seemed to be ignoring a lot of the . . . ignoring the responsibility to towns and villages that they look after in this.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would . . . I know we have this piece of legislation. We've also talked and we've met with some chamber of commerces, and we're meeting with some more councils and chamber of councils dealing with this Bill. And they would like us to — the ones I've talked to my constituency — would still like us to try and get the government to try and put more money into the water treatment plants and the grant-sharing grants that are out there to try to help them with their water quality plants. I've got a town of Kenaston that's applied three times and has been turned down because the funding is gone already before it's already been applied with that.

So, Mr. Speaker, with that particular piece of legislation, I'd like to adjourn debate on it right now.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Nilson that **Bill No. 28 — The Health Information Protection Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise to speak to Bill No. 28, The Act to amend The Health Information Protection Act.

There's two important pieces of legislation inherent within here that deal with two different issues. And essentially these are the information compiled for use by persons in the health care profession for patients. And that is one of the important aspects of this legislation. The other important aspect, obviously, is the need to secure privacy on such records.

The records are becoming increasingly important for a number of reasons. First of all we have more health care professionals in various specialties than ever before in history. And the crossing of information is becoming more and more necessary so that the . . . both for the research aspect of health care in general and secondly to make sure that patients are always being given up-to-date treatment and that their treatments are not counterproductive. So that the intent of having an electronic

database on patient care would make sure that medications are not crossing, that they would keep up to date with checkups, they would keep up to date with specialists.

It is a good idea and it's well intended so that this . . . that there isn't an overlap of services. It should in the long run provide efficiencies for our health care system and also provide patient protection so that all physicians and members of the nursing community, pharmacists, etc., are being able to be fully aware of the needs and history of any individual patient.

At the same time that we look forward to that aspect coming into place and providing efficiencies in the health care system so that dollars can be used elsewhere to better provide for the citizens of Saskatchewan, there is the great concern with regards to privacy around these matters.

It has been said that in the last 50 years the greatest concern globally was the Cold War and that the concern that is going to be first and foremost in a person's mind relative to Western democracies, it's going to be the nature of privacy. It is a worry I think that has long been out there in the philosophical field. Of course George Orwell's book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, spelled out early the possibility of state abuse of information and control when essentially you can move towards a totalitarian regime when all information is controlled by the state.

We recognize that there has to be a balance with regards to information that the state is going to compile and for that matter that private matters are going to compile — be they insurance companies, banks, whoever — and that all this information, at the core of it, Mr. Speaker, the individual does have rights. They have rights to this privacy and we recognize that this legislation is trying to address this and address it in a balanced form.

We do have concerns that as Bill 29 in 1999 was passed but never proclaimed, that there was ongoing need to iron some of this out. This is not going to be an easy matter because the pace of technology moves incredibly quickly and unfortunately it appears that the pace of government often does not. But as legislators, it is incumbent upon us to get it right the first time.

We've seen just recently the fickleness of security and it had to do with a missing hard drive. In the end we can only pass laws and hope that persons obey them and it's very difficult, if people are breaking laws, to ensure security 100 per cent. But I was one of the individuals that received a letter from my insurance agent saying that some of my personal information could have gone awry and it does become very worrisome.

It's also worrisome that 15 years ago identity theft was basically a non-issue and now unfortunately is the reality for a number of persons.

When we have the federal government looking into legislation concerning the human genome, it becomes increasingly important again with regards to our provincial legislation on health care and the privacy of individual patients that we have the correct checks and balances in place, that the information that is compiled can be used for good purposes and that it not go astray and be used for purposes which could inadvertently through a system result in extreme damage to individuals.

The next 25 years I think are going to, in large part, be defined as we move more into a global economy, more into an information age. We're moving into something called Evernet, which is we're talking about the Internet being present in every electronic device on the face of the earth. It is going to be incumbent upon us again, as legislators, Mr. Speaker, that we have good laws passed which at the essence protect and respect the rights of the individual and their privacy.

And that being said, Mr. Speaker, it . . . I believe that this Bill is a good first step but there is a great deal of work to be done here initially and I think ongoing into the future.

I have concerns with some of the methodologies being employed. When we see the results of the land titles through ISC and \$107 million spent there, it's still not working properly and we see individuals that have had the same name on a piece of property mistaken and had caveats put against their lands and whatnot.

The seriousness of the issue of making sure that patients' records are not crossed and that the IT aspect of the intent of the legislation is met properly is very important. I have very little faith in our current government, if they intend to go forth within their health care system of building the IT system on their own, that the integrity of the data would be protected. As their history has demonstrated through ISC, this has not been a good forerunner.

And secondly, that the pace on which it would be kept up relative to the changing pace of technology, if it's all going to be reinventing the wheel, we may have some fairly serious issues ahead of us.

With those things being said and having outlined the parameters that I think need to be addressed, I do think there's more work will need to be done with regards to this legislation and, if I may say so, Mr. Speaker, on an ongoing basis. So with that I would move that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 25 — The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2003

Clause 1

The Chair: — I would invite the Minister of Health to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me this afternoon to my far left, Pat Inglis, who's the director of program support for the community care branch and to my immediate left, Dawn Skalicky-Souliere, who is the provincial coordinator of the personal care homes program, community care branch. And then to my right, Leanne Lang, who is Crown counsel from the Department of Justice.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Minister and officials, welcome this afternoon. It's a pleasure to ask a few questions. As I understand the legislation, its intent is to

provide a framework for protection in the event of disruption of service through bankruptcies or things of that nature, personal care homes that are over a certain size.

And, Minister, I wonder if you might describe the size requirements and the bonding requirements that'll be there for personal care homes — I believe it's over 21 beds — but could you outline that in more detail?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'm happy to answer that question. You are correct in stating that this relates to personal care homes over 21-bed capacity. And the whole purpose here is to basically protect the public, the patients to make sure that there is care there for them in the long term. And if there is some problem with the financial arrangements of the particular place, that there will be a bond in place to cover that.

I think your question relates to what are the size of the bonds or kind of what would be the cost. I'll give you some examples of different sizes. For a 25-bed personal care home, the amount of security required would be \$62,500, and the estimated annual cost of a bond of that amount is about \$1,250 a year. If you instead got an irrevocable letter of credit, the cost could be, be anywhere between \$625 and \$1,875 per year.

So that's kind of the range of the costs at that end. If you went up to a 100-bed personal care home which would then require a security arrangement of \$250,000, the annual cost of a bond would be about \$5,000. The annual cost of an irrevocable letter of credit would be probably between \$2,500 and \$7,500.

So that gives you a range of the cost. It's not an onerous cost on the operators. It is another cost, but we think that that cost is clearly justified in the kind of protection it provides for the residents who we're concerned about.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Minister, using the examples you've outlined, where I believe you said using the 100-bed example that the bond requirement would be \$250,000, would that . . . Is it envisaged that that would then be sufficient to provide a continuity of care for some period of time? And if that's the case, what period of time have you used in your formula to establish the level of bonding?

(15:15)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The calculation of that amount, whether it's a 25-bed home or 100-bed home, relates to a wind-down of about six months.

Mr. Gantefoer: — And the amounts of the bonds then would provide for the normal fee structure for a six-month period of time? Is that how the math goes? I understand personal care home monthly rates vary between 14 and \$1,800 a month, something of that nature. Is that sort of the math, the 14 or \$1,800 times six, times the number of beds — is that roughly the formula?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The way the cost is calculated is such that it would cover the cost of the administrator, who you would put in to manage the home; the cost of one month's lost rent, in the case of the person who ran the operation already collected the rent and then didn't use it to pay for staff and other supplies.

But then, the ongoing costs would continue in normal course and people would pay their rent as it proceeds. But there'd be some other costs, but the primary costs are the administrator and the concern about that lost month's rent.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, the Bill provides for the appointment of an administrator, and you've indicated that part of the bond fee is to cover the cost of that administrator. And it also says that the minister, yourself, can require that an operator in any existing personal care home, in any category, can also be required to post a bond or similar sorts of securities. Does that . . . When the words, in any category, are used, does that circumvent the minimum of 21 beds? And what I'm concerned about is a concern that has been expressed by some personal care home operators that are smaller than 21 beds, who say is the provision, such as the way it's written, give the latitude for the minister in some circumstances to be able to impose this bonding requirement on personal care homes that would be smaller than 21 beds?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question for clarification because it is an important question.

The way this is set up is that it wants to capture those places that would expand. And so for example an existing personal care home with the daily census of 20 or less who wanted to increase to more than 21, well then they would have to get a bond. Or an existing personal care home with more than 21 beds and they want to increase it by at least 10 beds, then they would have to get a bond.

So it's to deal with people who make a fairly major expansion of their operations. But not existing homes. So existing homes wouldn't have to worry about it at all.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. That was one of the fundamental concerns that were raised, that were brought to our attention in terms of the existing personal care homes.

Is there any provision in this legislation in the bonding requirement that determines or predetermines any parameters on what the monthly fees can be set, or is this left to other legislation in terms of the parameters for setting fees or for establishing operating procedures and establishing what services are required? Is this legislation in any way affect the standards of the operation of these homes above 21?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The fees that are charged in personal care homes are based on the market in a community and there isn't anything here that would affect that — other than I suppose the fact that the bonding costs, they may end up trying to recoup that through their fees. But that would be a very, very minimal cost.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, I guess an important part of this exercise would be to find appropriate administrators to . . . that would have some experience in the services that personal care homes provide. So it isn't sort of like finding a administrator out of a public accounting firm or something of that nature that would be the case in other bankruptcies or disruptions of business scenarios.

Does the department have any vision as to where these

administrators would come from? Would they be from the regional health authorities? Are there a pool of people that potentially you could see drawing on as potential people to act as administrators in the event the bond would have to be acted on.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the first place that the department or the court would look for in getting an administrator is somebody who had a strong financial background. And most often those are people who are in some of the consulting firms, whether it's accounting or otherwise. And so that would be the, often the first choice.

But there may be some people who would have been retired administrators or other people who had some connection with the regional health authority or the department that could possibly put themselves forward. But most often they would be in a consulting capacity as well.

But I think the simple answer is we're going to get a professional to do this and make sure it's done properly.

Mr. Gantefoer: — One final question, Minister. I'm assuming that in the legislation there is the ability to make sure that before a licence is awarded to a personal care home above 21, that the requirements of the bonding or irrevocable line of credit are in place and continue to be in place at the appropriate level. Because sometimes, in other instances, we understand that there's a bond in place and when all of a sudden something unfortunate happens, it's shown that the bond wasn't large enough or it wasn't kept up and it wasn't monitored to make sure that the level of bonding was appropriate to the circumstance.

And I wonder, Minister, if you could outline the process for ensuring that the appropriate level of bond is in place on an ongoing basis.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — As you can see in the legislation, if the bond isn't in place the licence is suspended for the personal care home.

The practical matter of how this will be dealt with is within the Saskatchewan Health. Approximately four months before the end of a particular licence there will be a contact with the personal care home to make sure that all of the appropriate documents are in place before the expiry of the bond or letter of credit, because it also is directly tied in with the licence. And so I think also what happens, especially as with some of the larger operations, there is a regular conversation, if I could put it that way, that takes place between the personal care home and the people within the department.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Now, Minister, in terms of receiving the licensing and reviewing this issue four months prior to the expiry of the current licence, is there the requirement to submit financial statements as well to the department to sort of get some sense of the financial stability of the institution, or are those not requirements?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — When the initial application is filed for a large personal care home, included in that package will be the budget or the plan, the operational plan for the operation, and

also obviously the bond or confirmation that there is a bond or letter of credit in place.

On an ongoing basis there wouldn't be a request each year for the operational plan unless there was some concern. But there is the ability for the department, through the minister's order, to request information at any time if there is some concern about a particular operation.

But on a practical basis I think the ongoing operation would be a signal to everybody that things are going well. And they will have clear evidence of the bond being in place and that will be the protection for the individuals who are resident in these homes.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the officials who have provided the advice, and the member opposite for his questions, and I move that we report this Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 22 — The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003

The Chair: — I'll take a brief pause while the minister brings in different officials.

Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Lorenz: — Request leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chair through you to the Assembly I would like to introduce the students from McLurg seated in your east gallery. There's 14 students that have travelled from Wilkie some four and a half hours to visit Regina and visit the Assembly, and take a little tour of the Assembly and the Legislative Building as well.

With them is Scott Meunier, teacher and chaperone, with the students as well. They are having some opportunity to, I guess, partake in the activities of our Assembly, as well as I'll be meeting with them a little bit later on this afternoon.

So if you can join me in welcoming them to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 22 — The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003 (continued)

The Chair: — I invite the Minister of Health to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me again, Leanne Lang, who's Crown counsel from the Department of Justice. And to my immediate left I have Kevin Wilson, who is the acting executive director of the drug plan and extended benefits branch, and accompanying him is Andrea Laturmas, who's the manager, policy and information unit drug plan and extended benefits branch.

Clause 1

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome this afternoon to some new officials and of course, the minister. Minister, The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003 as outlined in second reading discussions is something that we very much support in principle and think this is probably very worthwhile amendments.

In some way, a number of components to it; some of it's technical that is just updating the Act and changing wording in the Act. The second component, I understand, creates a different framework for a fund, a research fund if you like, that will . . . has sort of been hung up in limbo because of some technical reasons.

And it also prescribes a framework whereby pharmacists are going to be enabled to, under proper circumstance and protocols, be able to prescribe some medications primarily designed in emergency birth control field.

(15:30)

Minister, the technical kinds of a housekeeping nature, if you like, to the association, am I correct in my assessment that a good proportion of this legislation in detail is technical updating?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is yes. Basically the major part is changing the name of the association from the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association to the Saskatchewan College of Pharmacists. And that engenders a number of changes or amendments right throughout the Act and so I think that's really the bulk of the Bill.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The second part of the Bill, as well as I understand it, relates to the ability for the Pharmaceutical Association to access this research fund that was developed. Can you explain how this legislation will permit access ability to those research funds?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to that question is that this creates bylaw-making authority to allow them to transfer the funds so that they can be used.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, can you as well describe how the fund was established, where the funds came from, and why they sort of got hung up in limbo?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes, I'll try to explain. Basically what happened was in, I think 1994 approximately, there was a goal to, through the Saskatchewan pharmacists' association, to set up an alternative reimbursement fund. And there was a vote in October of 1994 whereby the members voted to ratify a contract with the drug plan that included a check off of three cents per

prescription. And pursuant to this amount, these funds were kept and paid to a specific fund that would allow for funding innovative services for people who are pharmacists.

And some of them were . . . One of the suggestions at the time was certain fees for trial prescriptions. In 1999, June 17 of 1999, the Minister of Health received notice from the association that they didn't want this check-off to continue any more so it ceased effective July 1, 1999 and since that date no further deductions have been made.

But there is a fund of money that's there available, that is comprised of this 3 cents per prescription over a four-and-a-half-year period, approximately, and that fund will be used for its intended purpose by the association to look at some innovative and alternative ways to basically pay fees to pharmacists.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. The third component in this legislation sets out the framework at least whereby pharmacists could be enabled to prescribe certain medications, and I believe that they are particularly designed in regard to emergency birth control.

Does this legislation provide a framework for prescribing medications broader than the emergency birth control or are they restricted to that specific category?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — This legislation provides the regulation power within this Act to allow for some expansion of the role of the pharmacist. But in consultation with the medical profession and with the pharmacists, it's very clear that this particular power is limited to the prescription of the emergency birth control or the morning-after pill.

And the control on that is very much within the Saskatchewan Health and the Minister of Health as far as any expansion. And I think it's very clear to say that any change in that would involve a lot of consultation with the pharmacists and with the medical profession and any other professions that may be affected. The clear goal now is just to have the ability to deal with that one particular type of medication.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. In our discussions with the Saskatchewan Medical Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, and the College of Pharmacists, that seems to be where the consensus is, is that all three are in agreement that they will work collaboratively to establish the protocols and the terms of reference, and also I believe a training program that would be required for any pharmacist that would be interested in availing themselves of the right to prescribe these prescriptions.

So I think the comment from the medical profession is that they're supportive of this as it pertains to this specific medication. But they would want very much — and I'm pleased to hear you assure the House and for the record — that if there was any consideration of expanding this issue that they would be fully consulted, and I think that's important.

Minister, some of the concerns that I've heard, notwithstanding the official position of the respective associations, is concerns about saying, for example, will a pharmacist be able to avail

himself of sufficient medical background about an individual who may present herself for a prescription of emergency birth control?

Would they be . . . In these protocols that are going to be established, are they going to be able to access enough medical information so that the pharmacist would feel confident and competent about writing script for emergency birth control? And what procedures do you have envisioned so that the pharmacist could avail themselves of that required information?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Very clearly, the intent here is only those pharmacists who wish to participate in this program would do that, so not all pharmacists are required to do it. The School of Pharmacy, together with the College of Pharmacists — as it will become when this legislation is passed — have worked together to put together a training program that deals with that particular issue. And they obviously will be working together with some of their other professional colleagues, the doctors, on some of the specific questions.

But clearly the goal is that nobody would be involved with providing these kinds of prescriptions unless they've gone through the training that's provided, and they also are willing or volunteer or have made a choice to actually be participants. And so, it's a process that allows for this to happen; it doesn't require it to happen. And I think that's an important point. But we also know that there is a need across the province and so that there will be requests that come from pharmacists who want to participate in this program.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, has there been any assessment of where the request may come from and where the pharmacist might be likely to accept this accreditation for these prescriptions? Are they coming from more remote and rural communities where there might not be a 24-hour medical clinic available or availability of doctors, or are they coming from both potentially rural and urban settings? Or do you see this as being something that will be used in greater frequency in rural and remote areas where there might not be as easy access to 24-hour physician services?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — It's a bit of a hard question to answer prospectively about Saskatchewan. But we know that in other provinces where they've introduced this ability, it appears that most of the prescriptions are requested late at night, or during the night, or on weekends. And that otherwise people would use their family doctors like they normally would because nothing in here prevents the normal way of getting these prescriptions, which is to go to your family doctor.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, do you envisage that in the protocols that if a pharmacist would then prescribe one of these medications, that there would be a requirement that the pharmacist would notify that individual's family physician so that their health record could show that this prescription was indeed written for this individual?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that in most cases that's exactly what would occur, is that the pharmacist would provide the information. But it's not a specific requirement that that happen, but that would be the professional thing that would happen. And I think it would be part of the training of the pharmacist.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 30 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank the officials who provided advice in this session and the member opposite for his questions. And I move that we report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 25 — The Personal Care Homes Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I move the Bill a third time right now.

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

Bill No. 22 — The Pharmacy Amendment Act, 2003

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

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

(15:45)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

Subvote (HE01)

The Chair: — I would recognize the Minister of Health to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to have with me today, to my immediate left, Glenda Yeates, who is the deputy minister; to my immediate right, Rod Wiley, who's the executive director of finance and management services. Immediately behind me is Duncan Fisher, who's the assistant deputy minister; to his left is Lauren Donnelly, who's the executive director of the acute and emergency services branch; and to Duncan's right is Bert Linklater, the executive director of district management services.

Thank you.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. And welcome, Minister, and officials this afternoon for I guess about an hour of estimates, and it's a pleasure for me to be here today.

Today we're going to sort of cover the waterfront of some topics. A number of my colleagues have questions that they would like addressed as well; so rather than focussing on one specific area, we're going to sort of ask a number of areas that are going to cover it. So it will be a little unfocussed.

Mr. Minister, I have two or three issues that I'd like to address first and then turn it over to my colleagues, and depending on how verbose they are and you are, we may be able to ask a few more questions later on.

Minister, one of the questions pertains to the issue surrounding the medical age of, or the age of consent for medical procedures. Would you outline what the current situation is and under what legislation it is enabled? What is the age of majority? Is it 18, is it 16, is it 15? How, from a medical standpoint, is the age of consent applied as it pertains to minors receiving medical procedures with or without the consent of their parent or guardian?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. This is a chance to provide a little bit of information. In Saskatchewan there is no legislated age of consent for medical treatment, and this is common across the country.

There are a couple of provinces that have some legislation but most provinces allow for common law principles to apply, so that patients who — it doesn't matter their age or their marital status — can consent to their own medical treatment when they're able to understand and appreciate the nature of their illness, the options that are available for treatment, and the risks and the benefits associated with each treatment option.

Basically how it works is that the health practitioner determines whether the individual, regardless of the age, is capable of giving consent for the proposed treatment, and it's a patient-doctor relationship, or nurse practitioner that's involved. And this is the common approach across the country. And so in Saskatchewan we could say we use the common law method of deciding what the age of consent is for medical treatment.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, you mention that there were some exceptions to that. Could you outline ... are you aware of where the exceptions are and in what circumstances they apply?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, I think in a couple of provinces, Ontario, New Brunswick, and British Columbia, they actually put right into their law that the common law principle is the law in their province. Quebec permits young people who are at least 14 years of age to consent to treatment, and in Manitoba they have some legislation that talks about age 16 but there are other pieces of legislation that say the common law consent applies.

So I think generally, other than Quebec, it's the common law position that applies in Canada.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I've had concern expressed from people that have a lack of timely reception for a medical procedure, I believe it's called bariatric surgery or in ... more commonly called a stomach stapling procedure. And there was some concerns that the wait times for this procedure were inordinately long.

And I believe that it was indicated that there is a concern about having appropriate equipment, table and operating table facilities, for people who are over 300 pounds in weight. And of course this is why they would be interested in that procedure which is fairly radical.

Minister, can you update us on the availability of this procedure; and indeed if there is an issue surrounding replacement of equipment, if that issue is being addressed; and what you foresee about the availability of these procedures to move forward?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question and I will try to answer all of the components of it. And if I miss something, please ask more.

But basically what happens is that in Western Canada there appear to be two places that do this surgery — Saskatoon and Medicine Hat. And in Saskatoon there are some challenges with some of the equipment, some of the beds, related to occupational health and safety. And it is on the plan to look at replacing some of the equipment to deal with patients over 300 pounds in weight.

Right now if a patient is over 300 pounds of weight they then have to go to Medicine Hat. It's a fully insured service so it's covered by our medical plan here, but the operation would be done in Medicine Hat.

As it relates to the waiting list, it's a little more complicated issue. With the procedure there has to be a critical care bed available after the procedure is done. It's a fairly invasive or dramatic surgery so it requires some recovery time in critical care. So therefore it's a scheduled surgery but then there has to be made sure that there's a critical care bed available. And that's why sometimes the waits seem to take a little bit longer, would be one of the explanations.

But practically, there haven't been a large number of cases so therefore not many places. There's two in Western Canada that do it. But there is an increasing number of people unfortunately who require this service. And so I know that they are looking carefully at some of the equipment money that's available this year or next year to deal with the bed issue or the operating table issue in Saskatoon.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Minister, you mentioned that there are some issues surrounding waiting times. Could you indicate, are the waiting . . . what the waiting times are in Saskatoon and in Medicine Hat, and what the referral processes are if Medicine Hat's waiting time is less?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We don't have the specific information about Medicine Hat because practically, any patient over 300 pounds from Saskatchewan would be referred to Medicine Hat as an option. If you would like, we can attempt to get that information for you. But at this stage we don't have the actual waiting time.

Patients under 300 pounds and under are being dealt with in Saskatoon. And they would fit into the procedures that are available in Saskatoon. And the best way to find out those waiting lists would be to call the surgical care coordinator in Saskatoon.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Minister. I have one other issue that I want to touch on briefly before I turn it over to my colleagues.

Last month I had submitted a written question requesting the cost of procedures that are public insured by the health system. And I received a reference to documents that show what fees physicians are paid for certain services. And that is only part of the answer, of course, because for any given procedure there's more costs associated with that procedure than just what's paid to physicians. And I was wondering if the department . . . Perhaps the department doesn't have that kind of statistical information. What I'm sort of getting at is, does an appendectomy cost \$500 of which \$200 is made up of physician services and \$300 is made up of district health board cost to provide all the other services?

And so what are the total costs of an appendectomy, first of all? And then second of all, how many of those procedures do we perform in the province in a year, was the information that I was looking for.

And I was wondering, does the department have that information? Am I looking for something that is simply not available; or is it available, and if it is, would it be possible for me to receive that information?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the not-so-simple answer is that we don't do cost accounting in the same way that an American hospital does or a hospital that sort of bills for each service.

We obviously have the numbers of a particular procedure that are done that . . . So for example, appendectomies, we would have some idea of the numbers and so that would be there.

But to actually put the cost for the whole regional health authority and then divide it up in some way that relates to the various procedures, we haven't set our system up that way in Saskatchewan. Sometimes you try to make some guesses about it, but they're not very good and they're not very helpful for lots of reasons.

But I know often people will ask me, as the Minister of Health, well you know if I went to Grand Forks or Minneapolis, this is how that would be billed to me and they show all the different kinds of things that happen. We don't end up keeping our accounting that way. And I don't think it's some way that we would actually go, in that those ways of accounting are fairly expensive.

But practically, we try to do some proxies or guesstimates of where we fit. And so sometimes you may see some of those figures, but they're really fairly broad guesses.

(16:00)

Mr. Gantfoer: — Well, Minister, I'm wondering if there are . . . there's the undertaking for sort of a transparency and accountability in the health system across the country. And I'm wondering if some of these ideas . . . I'm not particularly that much interested in comparing it to the American system but comparing it to other Canadian jurisdictions, to learn.

You know, again keeping on the example of appendectomies, are the way we provide our appendectomy services, you know, sort of effective and reasonable in comparison to other jurisdictions across Canada? And if we don't sort of compare

those notes . . . I'm not interested in keeping track of every gauze and bandage that might be there.

The other thing is, is that I think some services are actually contracted to, like Workers' Compensation for example, where there would actually be a charge to Workers' Compensation for certain services. And I'm wondering how those numbers are determined if you don't keep any of this information.

That's more where I'm interested in the transparency and accountability, not only of what it costs us and how many we're doing, but maybe we're doing it an awful lot better than other jurisdictions and they could learn from us, and we from them.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — You're asking some very good questions and they're the same kind of questions that are asked continually within the system. What happens now is that we work with CIHI, the Canadian Institute of Health Information, around specific issues and so that practically there are comparators in that information that would talk about numbers of procedures per population, numbers of procedures per the numbers of providers that you have in your province, and comparisons are made.

One of the challenges becomes, are we using our resources in the most effective manner within the province? And sometimes that relates to the number of centres where you do it, whether it's too many or too few, the numbers of providers who do that kind of work. That's exactly the kind of question that we will also be sending to the Quality Council. I mean it's one of the kinds of things they will be looking at. Are you using your dollars most effectively?

It's some of the kind of work that HSURC (Health Services Utilization and Research Commission) actually did around, should you be doing certain kinds of procedures any more when there's a better way to do it? Or are there some other more effective drugs that you might use, which is what our drug plan looks at, the people involved there, on a continuing basis.

So I think if, you know, if there are some very specific questions, I can see if I can find some of the answers. But these kinds of questions are being asked on a continual basis.

One of the things that we're doing in our new accountability structure for the regional health authorities is allocating the money into the various parts of the system on a regional health authority basis. The health authorities then are saying to us, well these are some, these are the things that we're going to be doing on a regular basis.

This is the first year with that kind of a structure, but it will provide us I think over some time with answers to more of the kind of questions that you're asking, because they are clearly the questions that are being asked right across the whole system. And they're important questions.

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

Mr. Minister, I want to read a letter I received from one of my constituents. Her name is Pat Parent, and I'm sure you are familiar with this case, but I will read the letter. I quote:

I read with great interest, the article on "The Third Page" of the Star Phoenix dated Feb. 24th, 2003. I was struck by how the case of Laureen Schan, who has waited 37 months for surgery, so closely parallels mine. I have been waiting 42 months for a total right knee replacement, which was to be followed in 6 months by a total left knee replacement.

In the article, Mr. Nilson, stated that you "Need to find out these kind of stories" so here is mine.

A year ago, in January 2002, I received a copy of a letter written by my Orthopedic Surgeon to the booking office of the Yorkton Regional Health Center — stating that I had been waiting two and a half years at that time for the surgery, and that a "Very urgent appointment to arrange surgery was needed within the next three months."

Well, the three months came and went, I called the doctor's office but was told it was up to the booking office. I called there several times and there was only a recorded message. So I left my name and phone number, each time, and stated the reason for my call, but received no answer.

I called the doctor's office early in Oct, 2002, and . . . (told that I would) was told that I would be put on the "Urgent" short list. In the meantime the strike happened and everything was at a stand still. Then my Specialist gave his resignation and left Saskatchewan at the end of January 2003. Apparently, his operating room time had previously been reduced, but after he gave his resignation he was allowed more O.R. time, but the urgent list was so long, (that) he never got to my name.

I have since seen another Specialist who feels (that) he cannot do the surgery because of (the) possible complications, and (he) has referred me to yet another Specialist. This was done on January 14th of this year and I am still waiting to see him. I've been told there is a 7-9 month waiting period for the initial appointment, but because I am classed as urgent, I've been put on the cancellation list, hoping to get in sooner. But then, how much longer do I have to wait for surgery?

I can barely walk from room to room in my . . . (house). I need to use a cane in the house. I've also had to purchase a brace at the cost of \$1,000.00 and a walker for \$400.00. Some of this was covered by insurance, but not all. I am 70 years old and in reasonably good health except for my knees. My husband is 74 and had a 6 by-pass surgery last June, and suffered complications for a couple of months which slowed his recovery. He has to do most of the housework as I can't, I also cannot do the shopping, or walk any distance at all. As my knees deteriorate, I find even going to church a hardship. I love to play cards, but when I get up from a chair, the pain when I get up is almost unbearable.

When I could not sleep at night because of the pain, my family doctor Prescribed a narcotic to help ease it. I don't like taking it, but the pain at times is unbearable.

Did I slip through the cracks like Laureen Schan? How many more are (out) there like us . . . ?

I'm waiting & waiting & waiting.....and the pain goes on....And on.....and.....on..... When will it end???

Sincerely, Pat Parent.

And, Mr. Minister, Ms. Parent . . . this letter is dated March 7 of this year and she also states on here that she has cc'd (carbon copy) you. And I was wondering what action has been taken regarding her situation.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for your question. Unfortunately I'm not able, as the Minister of Health, to respond to specific cases of individuals. What I will say though is that I did respond personally to that letter on March 27, and so I have written back to that particular individual.

What I would say though is that the story that you've read here is one of the reasons that we've set up the Saskatchewan surgery registry and also put in Saskatchewan surgical care coordinators, where we have people in Saskatoon and Regina now who will be able to talk to individuals who are involved in the whole business of trying to sort out where they fit on to a surgical list.

And we are in a position where we have developed, with the doctors and with the administrative and other people within the health authorities, an assessment package — which has been tried out now in Moose Jaw for the last four and a half months and we hope to have it expanded to the whole province very shortly — whereby all patients will be assessed on a similar basis depending on which particular kind of need that they do have.

And practically it's a response that we have been working at together with many, many people to try to make sure that individuals know where they are on a waiting list, they have some clear expectation of how that would . . . fits into the appropriate care for them. One of the key points is that we want to make sure that people are being dealt with in an optimum time around various procedures. And it will be clearly the goal of the action plan from December 2001 that we have this service implemented as soon as possible.

But as you can understand, this is a very complicated thing. It involves the surgeons and their doctors' offices, it involves the operating rooms and the scheduling of the operating rooms, it involves the administration, and it involves people who are working together with them on a province-wide basis.

Clearly we also have the Web site which has some of the preliminary information as it relates to surgical care in this province.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You have stated that it was a complex situation and albeit it may be, but this woman has now waited 45 months for surgery. And this is a government that promised during the last election campaign for shorter waiting lists and this . . . You take back 45 months from right now and this situation has been going on since before the September 16, 1999 election. And I really think that this is inexcusable, the treatment that she has received from . . . with her health care.

The lady in question did tell me that she received a letter saying that she would have to wait another six to nine months for assessment, and this is already after waiting 45 months. Now her doctor that used to treat her in Yorkton, he has since moved to BC (British Columbia), and he offered to put her on a list out there but she cannot make the trip out there. And there is an article in the *Leader-Post* that says, and it quotes you, Mr. Minister, or it quotes the minister, Mr. Chair, as saying:

“By the summertime . . . we will have (everyone) . . . who is lined up for surgery have an assessment by their doctor based on standardized method of assessment . . . We hope to eliminate any of the longer-term waits that some people have.”

And then in her letter she received from the Minister of Health it says that she will have to wait another six to nine months for assessment. Well it's getting awful close to summertime so the dates just don't jive. So I would like a response from you on that.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Perhaps I could have a clarification. You said there was a letter from the minister that referred to six to nine months. Perhaps you could clarify that.

Ms. Eagles: — She said she heard from someone in the minister's office, that is what she told me, Mr. Chair. And so she said the letter said six to nine months. And when you said that you had responded to her letter, I believe that's what you said when I asked the initial question, I just assumed that that was the letter she received from you.

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that to clarify that, basically these are handled in the regions. The minister's office would never give a time frame on these kinds of things. And so practically, that's one of the challenges.

I think, I think though, on a general basis — and it makes it difficult here in this House for me as minister when you keep referring to a specific patient — but generally we are working very carefully. And the point is exactly right that we will be going into this assessment program for the patients right across the province.

But I think the key point, and it is referenced in your comments as well, or the member's comments as well, which is that we have to rely on the professionals. We have to rely on the doctors who are doing the assessments of the patients. And one of the challenges has been to make sure that the availability of the surgical procedures matches some of the things that the doctors have assessed. And that's been one of the challenges, not just in Saskatchewan but right across the whole country.

What we are trying to do is to make sure that we end up having a process in Saskatchewan that allows for the surgical or physician assessment of patients in a way that is understandable to the patients, understandable to everybody in the . . . who is involved in that particular kind of process. In other words, that it's fair but it also meets some of the optimal kinds of procedural points that we need. And so that's the system that we're putting into place. And it's because of various problems

that have arisen over the years because we need to address this one. And so we're working at it.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And to the minister, through the minister, welcome to his officials as well.

A couple of different wide-ranging topics if I may. The first one relates to a constituent concern that was raised with me. This particular constituent is a nurse and is diabetic and uses the insulin pump method, mostly because of her erratic hours at work and this particular method allows her to ensure that she's, that she's using the insulin correctly without having to schedule her hours around injection. And I'm wondering, Minister, if you could explain whether or not the department looked at or is still looking at changes with respect to the materials required for the insulin pump method as it did for the needles, for the injection method.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question because clearly one of the goals of our system would be to try to provide the kinds of equipment that would assist in this particular case.

The answer to your simple question is yes, we did look at this very carefully. We had a certain amount of money to work with and we knew that by expanding around some of the supplies on the diabetics we would affect about 15,000 people who were getting those ones.

We also knew though that there was a demand, especially for people like you mentioned who have some erratic hours of work, around the pump. We are looking at this. One of our goals obviously would be to try to figure out a way, over time, to further expand our program to include this. The Canadian Diabetes Association has been very diligent and helpful in pointing out some of the opportunities.

One of the, I guess, signs of hope around this is that the technology is getting better and better. But also I think some of the costs are coming down a bit and so at some point our ability to pay for this and the costs are going to be close to matching. And then hopefully we'll then have it as a standard across the whole province as something that we can afford.

But at this point we've had to be pretty careful. The costs of the drug plan have gone up dramatically anyway and this would be something that we're adding.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that response. In looking at the insulin pump technology then and the potential for its coverage, does the department have a handle on how many diabetic patients would be using this currently and so therefore you would have been able to cost out what it would cost Sask Health if it was included similarly to the recent changes for injection?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think I can provide some information, but basically what I would be doing is relaying information that we confirm as being pretty close to the best estimate which comes from the Canadian Diabetes Association. And in the province, there are about 10,000 insulin-dependent patients in the province of Saskatchewan, and of that, sort of a high estimate of who might use the pump is about 10 per cent, so around 1,000 people.

The cost for the pump, as you may know, is \$5,000 approximately to purchase. But then the annual supplies are about \$2,000. And so it ends up being a cost that in some cases is manageable within a family, in other cases not.

And so part of our goal, obviously, would be to figure out at what point we can further expand the drug plan to include this, and I mean sooner rather than later. But once again, we also have a lot of people saying no more taxes. You know, where do you get the resources? And so it's dealing with that particular issue.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. If I can switch to another topic very briefly and it has to do with the budget announcement this year of the CT (computerized tomography) scan purchases for the province.

The question specifically is, as I understand what the budget laid out for the province, is that new CT scans would be purchased for Moose Jaw and Yorkton I believe — believe it was Yorkton — and Swift Current would be allocated, as I understand it, the used CT scan that has previously been shared between Moose Jaw and Swift Current and been up and down that highway.

And so I wonder if you could, Minister, explain the rationale for that? In other words, how closely has Sask Health officials when they . . . Have they inspected or had a look at the used CT scan that Swift Current will get in terms of the condition that it's in because it has been going up and down that highway now for I can't remember exactly. The previous minister I think had made the announcement two or three years ago. So I was just wondering.

So it's been up and down the highway quite a bit and I wonder, there's a bit of a concern in Swift Current about the state of that used CT scan that Swift Current's getting. And I wonder if you could comment on the work that the department did to inspect that unit and tell the Assembly about any . . . whether or not any costs to bring it up to the proper state, if it's not indeed in the premium state, are those to be covered off by Sask Health if there are attendant costs?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think I have a relatively positive answer for this one as well in the sense that what is happening right now is we are working together with the regions across the province around the technical specifications for new CT scans in the places that we're going to put them. Also in some other places where we have ones that are a little bit older.

The question becomes whether, if you buy a number of them, that you would then trade in all of the ones that you do have and get a whole batch of new ones or whether some of them have life left in them or not. And so I think that CT scan that's been shared between Moose Jaw and Swift Current is in that category of being assessed at the same time as they're looking at purchasing some new ones, about whether it shouldn't be traded in on some new ones.

Now the other side of this — I know from going to visit both Moose Jaw and Swift Current — is that the biggest challenge really around that particular machine, which is a good machine, is that when you move it, it ends up needing to be adjusted all

the time. And so one of the factors that has to be assessed by the people who are looking at this, together with Sask Health and the regions, is well, if it is affixed in a certain place and doesn't move, will it be at the standards that we need or its capacity? And that will also be weighed into the whole process.

Now ideally both you and I would prefer if we could somehow trade all these ones in and get the latest technology.

Another aspect for Swift Current is the issue of . . . As we move towards the new building, it will be . . . As they're doing their planning, they may want to say well let's not make a decision about what kind of a new equipment we have until we know what space and what kinds of things we want to do in that particular building, so that when it goes on line we've got the latest equipment at that stage.

So there's a whole number of options. They're all being discussed, and clearly we're working together with the professionals who have some questions, who and . . . but also we're looking at, well what kind of resources do we have now and how do we roll this out across the province.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Minister. I think you've helped answer this, the question which I could have probably put more succinctly. And the question basically is why, you know, what is the criteria for the department to decide that Swift Current ought to receive the used CT scan and other centres should receive a new one? How do you make that decision at the department is a question?

And I'm hearing — and I'll sit down and let you clarify this if I'm wrong — I'm hearing what you're saying is that well Swift Current may be, you know, a matter of years away from a brand-new facility, and at that point it may wish to either put in a brand-new machine and/or some other technology and therefore that's part of the reason.

And so I would assume then — not, certainly not being expert in this area — I'd assume then that if a new CT scan were to go into an old facility that was slated for replacement down the road, that it's not somehow desirable to have to move, to simply move the new CT scan — new in 2003 or '04 — move that new CT scan to the new facility 2005, 2006?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the answer is more that there are possibilities of doing a trade-in so that you might end up with newer equipment in Swift Current sooner. But one of the challenges is that as you move to the higher end, the more renovations required, the more specific space is required. And so I think that there are some challenges as they go forward with the design.

But it's not counted out at this possibility that we would end up getting rid of the existing one and getting two new ones.

(16:30)

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And one last topic I want to touch on, and to be fair in written questions I think yourself and the department have answered this quite clearly but I wouldn't mind getting it on the record in terms of *Hansard*.

It has to do with the new facility that the government announced, and again I think it's fair to say that the people of Swift Current and area, including the MLA, were grateful for the announcement that was made shortly after the budget. The subsequent written questions were trying to confirm clearly that — because we're talking about next fiscal year — trying to get a grip on exactly how the government could make that confirmation in light of the fact that it wouldn't be expended until fiscal 2004-2005. So that's the question then.

In the answers that you provided, Minister, you clearly indicated that it is, I think the word was, that it has been formally budgeted, the government share — 65 per cent — of the hospital. Not the study, not the 500,000 for the study, but the capital dollars for the hospital has been formally budgeted. So I'm assuming then that that has occurred in the next fiscal year as a part of the department's multi-year plan, five-year plan. But that Sask Health has clearly said look, this money for the Swift Current hospital capital project is there, next fiscal, it's approved and it's a done deal.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the simple answer to your question is yes. One of the challenges is that the scope is still being discussed with the regional health authority and with the architects and with everybody else in the planning. But this government plans to build that hospital during its next term and we will continue to do that, sir.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, and to your officials, I welcome the opportunity to ask questions today, a number of questions today.

I'm going to start by asking you about the early childhood development fund. I think it was something that was brought into your budget about three years ago. And I believe at that time it was about \$10 million that was divided between Health, at that time Education, and I think, Social Services. And I believe that at the introduction it was divided equally between the three departments and I see that now you're getting about \$6 million. Is that still federal money and is the money still divided . . . Is it still federal money divided between three different departments?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for the question. This is an important program for the children and mothers and families of the province.

This year the total budget is approximately \$13 million and Health's share is 6.69 million, and that's an increase of 2.56 million in Health.

Health does some of the addictions work, the mental health work, those kinds of things. Learning has another aspect of it and Community Resources has the sort of a daycare aspect, and the dollars are federal dollars that are going into this program.

But they're spent through three different departments because that's how we've provided these services, but they're very clearly coordinated. And I think the lead minister on it is the Learning minister.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I understood that it was federal dollars and I do appreciate the fact that they're

spent between these three departments. Is it up to your government to determine the split of the money between the three different departments or is it something that the federal government determines?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What happens is that the provincial government reports to the federal government what, what we . . . how we spend the money. And so they will ask us questions about how it's spent.

How is it allocated is the question I think you've asked. In each community, the way we've set up the program, there is a local community group of people who have worked on this particular project and they decide in their community how it's allocated between the different programs that come out of Health, Learning, and Community Resources.

Then the figures that are reflected here are . . . We just add all those numbers together we get from the local communities, and then that's what number shows up in our provincial budget. But it's the local area working together with, obviously, some of the provincial government employees deciding how to allocate the money. But those kinds of allocations are made in the local community.

Ms. Draude: — I wasn't, I'm not sure if I got the answer correctly but I believe you said that \$13 million or approximately \$13 million that was . . . (inaudible) . . . from the federal government this year, you could . . . your government could determine how much of it went to Health, how much went to education, how much went to community services?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think that we can determine it. How we've decided to do that, as a government, is to work with the local communities, and the actual allocation of the dollars happens in each community.

So in Prince Albert they may decide to allocate it between Health, Learning, and Social Services programs in a way that they want. Then we take all of those numbers that are created across the province, add them together, and that's the number we put in our budget.

And so practically, we have to be responsible to the federal government in our reporting for what's happened, but we . . . what we would say to them is that we think that the local community has a better idea of which services they need to complement what's happening there already. And that's what we're reporting back to you here in the legislature, and what we're reporting also to the federal government.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for that clarification. I understand now that the federal government is asking you to be accountable for the money, and in doing so you are asking the local people how it should be spent. And that of course is something that we believe in. The local people know what they need in their community.

The area that I want to go down today is probably not going to be surprising to you and that is the area of fetal alcohol syndrome, and I believe that you, through this, this is the area or the amount . . . In this budget item is where you are spending the money on fetal alcohol syndrome, probably some education

although maybe a lot of that is through the Department of Learning, but there would be some through Health when it comes to doctors' offices and, more importantly, the area of diagnosis.

I know that everyone in this Assembly and in the province is worried about and talks about the incidence of FASD (fetal alcohol spectrum disorder). And to my knowledge right now, there is one doctor that is a practising, diagnostic doctor in this area in Saskatoon and there's one that is hoping to be able to do this in Regina. But it's an area of great concern because with FASD, there's the two sides of the issue — there's education, and then assessing and diagnosing the people that have the condition at this time.

Can you give me an idea of the amount of money that your department spends on FASD, both on the education side of it and on the diagnosis side?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think your question relates to where do we get funds that we work with around fetal alcohol syndrome issues, and one of the places is this early learning program and, especially from the health perspective, the home visiting program which is very much a prevention-oriented program.

And so in all of the nine targeted areas in the province where this program exists, we have home visiting and that takes the bulk of the dollars that are part of this particular program.

Now we do have some other areas where we work on education and we work on our coordination with the Western provinces and the territories, and that's not money that's included in this particular program. That comes from another part of the budget. And if you are interested in talking about that I can try to answer some questions around that.

But I would say that we have made a very clear decision to work on prevention. And through this Kids First program and the home visiting part from Health, is very crucial in getting to the moms and to the families early to make sure that we prevent this very preventable problem.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Can you tell me how much money is spent on the education portion of FASD in your department, both from this portion of the budget and any other portion, any other area of the budget where you do spend money on this condition?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question and I will try to lay out in a clear fashion all the different kinds of things that we do.

In the Kids First program obviously there's an education element to it, but it involves individuals working with individuals so we don't have a specific amount that you can allocate or describe there.

But from a different area of the budget we end up providing money to the Saskatchewan Institute on Prevention of Handicaps. And you know about their program — \$82,800 comes from Health and \$40,000 comes from Community Resources and Employment. So that's \$122,000 that is provided to that institution or that organization which becomes sort of

our front-line education part for the province.

We also have had some grant money, \$15,000 around an FAS (fetal alcohol syndrome) advertising campaign — posters and things within the province. That is available this year. We paid just under \$100,000 for what's called the clinical teratology program, and that's for the funding of the doctor who does the assessment of patients. So that comes out of the Health budget.

(16:45)

We're also involved with a program in La Ronge which is a family intervention project, which is in addition to what we've been doing on the Kids First program, and that costs about \$60,000 a year.

As well we're part of the, new name, Canada Northwest Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Partnership. And this was one that we were involved . . . Originally it was Prairie, then Northern, and then we included British Columbia, and now we've become Canada Northwest.

And that partnership costs us \$20,000 a year plus staff time. I mean we end up . . . All of the provinces and territories contribute people to do different projects. Some years it's hosting a conference like we did in Saskatoon a few years; other years it's preparing particular research or something for that. But the straight cash cost of that is \$20,000.

So these are various amounts that we're spending in different ways, and we continue to emphasize though that the most important way that we have of dealing with this is through the Kids First program and doing the prevention. And so that's where we put obviously the bulk of our money, which is, you know, over 6, almost \$7 million.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I agree that when we're dealing with a condition that's totally preventable, education and the issue of ensuring that the general public knows that we don't have to be living with . . . people don't have to live with the outcome of FAS is very important.

I heard you say that part of the money was spent on addictions, and of course there's some of the counsellors that are needed for this issue as well. Many of the young people, parents that I've talked to have said that there isn't enough of these, enough trained people in the province to actually deal with the people. There's different levels of addictions or different levels of handicapped as a result of FASD.

SIAS (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) I believe has a course that's dealing with people that . . . with training. Is there any money that comes from Health or any expertise that comes from Health into that area as well?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't think there are any direct dollars that would go into that program. Often what happens at SIAS (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) is they ask around in the community and through different government departments around particular courses that they might like to develop with, is there a need, that kind of thing.

And so I'm sure some of our staff would have been part of that. But their budget comes out of the Learning budget and SIAS, as an institution, assesses what are the things that are needed in the province. And this is something that they have identified as a need.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Minister, how many counsellors is the Department of Health paying for dealing with young people or young adults that have FASD?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I don't have a specific answer around the fetal alcohol syndrome diagnosis or related problems, but these people are treated and worked with through the addictions people right across the whole province that are in the regional health authorities.

So what I do know, for the last full year of information which is ending March 31, 2002, we had about 20,796 people seen in the addictions program. Now if we could make a guesstimate of how many of those related to fetal alcohol syndrome then you would get some idea of what the number might be, but I don't have that information.

But I guess, I mean the good news on this though is that we do have a system across the province that is in the regional health authorities that do provide counselling on both the mental health side and the addictions side that is directly related to our Kids First program and some of the people who are identified with the problems there.

And those people also have training, and we in Saskatchewan have a lot of people who are very keen on working in this area which is fortunate for us. And so we have those people across the province as well.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I've had the opportunity to speak to some of your colleagues about this issue, and I believe there's six different departments that are dealing with FASD in some shape or form, and yet there doesn't seem to be any one department that's taking the lead on the issue. They tell me that there are reports and meetings every couple of months, but there actually is no one focused format either on the prevention side or talking about diagnosis of the many people that actually do need to be assessed.

Can you tell me, is your department trying to take the lead on this issue? Is it something that we can be looking forward to seeing some kind of a process where departments are actually working together to have one voice when it comes to FASD?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you for that question. Health is taking the lead on this. They're basically the Chair of the departments. But I'll give you the names: basically Health is Chair; Community Resources and Employment's involved; Learning's involved; Justice, Corrections and Public Safety; Government Relations, and Aboriginal Affairs, as well as the Office of Disability Issues.

And so representatives from all of those different departments work together on an interdepartmental committee on FASD, and this has been going on for a number of years now. And they provide direction on a number of the things that we've been doing. And we plan to continue that work but we also plan to do

some more public things as well, which include the community in some of the discussion. And I think that's important as well.

The committee reported progress.

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I have, and would like to introduce to you and to all members of the legislature, guests seated in the west gallery, who I might add just arrived in the nick of time to be able to introduced in the legislature and to be forever recorded in history in *Hansard*.

I am pleased, and a number of my colleagues made comment to the fact, that there's such a large group. In fact the community of Meadow Lake is a growing community and the population in fact has been increasing for quite a number of years. That's why you see such a large class.

I'd like to introduce to you 68 — I'm told 68 — grade 9 students from Jonas Sampson Junior High. With them are chaperones, Pat Beauline, Dawn Algers, Bernice Hazzard, Morgan Shank, Marvin Milnthorp, Emile Skopyk, and Doug Bennett, and their teacher, Terry Paley.

And if you would please join me in welcoming them to the legislature today. I'm about to go out and have a photo and have some drinks with them. So please welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it would enable the delegates . . . the delegation, I should say, from Meadow Lake to say that they came and shut down the legislature in the Saskatchewan Assembly. And to facilitate that, I will move that this House do now adjourn.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:58.

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