

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people in my area concerned about Highway No. 49. The prayer reads:

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Saskatoon, Chelan, Nut Mountain, and Kelvington.

I so present.

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

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

The signatures on this petition today, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Moose Jaw.

And I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition signed by Saskatchewan citizens who are concerned that deregulation and privatization in the electrical industry is causing electrical rates to increase dramatically in other jurisdictions. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government of Saskatchewan and the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to assure the people of Saskatchewan that deregulation and privatization of the electrical industry in Saskatchewan, including SaskPower, will not be allowed.

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by people from the communities of Saskatoon and Estevan.

And I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Cypress Hills. And it concerns the increase in crop insurance premiums for this particular year. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take

the necessary steps to have Saskatchewan Crop Insurance reverse the 2003 premium increases and restore affordable crop insurance premiums to our struggling farmers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signatures on this petition come from the community of Mendham.

I so present.

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by Saskatchewan people who are concerned about deregulation and privatization in the electrical industry that is causing electrical rates to rise dramatically in other jurisdictions. And the prayer goes as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the Government of Saskatchewan and the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan to assure the people of Saskatchewan that deregulation and privatization of the electrical industry in Saskatchewan, including SaskPower, will not be allowed.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by the good folks from Regina and Sifton, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway No. 43. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Regina, Gravelbourg, Neville, Saskatoon, and Zenon Park, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today with citizens concerned about the appallingly dangerous condition of Highway No. 20. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 20 from Nokomis to Strasbourg in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from the communities of Bulyea, Govan, Strasbourg, Duval, Sifton, and Watrous.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of people who are

very concerned about the condition of Highway 47, especially between Estevan and the Boundary dam resort. 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 folks from Estevan and Torquay. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise on behalf of people from my hometown who are proposing a constructive alternative to acquire a new CT (computerized tomography) scanner for the hospital in Swift Current. The prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to consider its plan to allocate the used CT scanner in Swift Current and instead provide a new CT scanner for the Southwest.

Mr. Speaker, as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And these petitioners all hail from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I'm pleased to rise with a petition from citizens who are extremely concerned about the vital Highway No. 43 and the terrible state that it's in. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed in total by the good citizens of Vanguard.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on behalf of the citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the state of health care in the area. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Kindersley, Flaxcombe, and Alsask.

I so present.

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

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

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

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and Borden.

I so present.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, presenting a petition of the concerned citizens for 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 the highway in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

The petition is signed by people from the town of Wilkie and the city of Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of citizens who are very concerned about the government's inaction in dealing with the water level in the Qu'Appelle Valley river system. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with the First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water level in the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm and uncertainty this dispute has caused.

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the community of Pasqua Lake and Cupar.

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 Saskatchewan crop insurance

premiums. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Whitkow, Spiritwood, and Mayfair.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received:

A petition concerning the deregulation and privatization of the electrical industry in Saskatchewan; and

Addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 13, 18, 27, 36, 41, 116, 119, 120, and no. 124.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Executive Council: what are the names of all the persons employed by Executive Council; and for each person, what is their title and what is their current salary?

And further, Mr. Speaker:

To the Minister of Finance: what is the number of personal income tax returns filed in Saskatchewan for tax year 2000 with total incomes in excess of \$500,00; second, what was the combined total income assessed for this group?

And there are similar questions for the years 2001, 2002, 1998, and 1999.

I so present.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Learning: for the academic year 2002-2003, how many students who were otherwise qualified had their applications rejected from all programs offered at the University of Saskatchewan, the University of Regina, and all of the province's SIAST campuses?

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 61 ask the government the following question:

To the CIC minister: what is the current status of the Prud'homme joint venture between TransGas Limited and MLTC incorporated; and further to that, what is the next

anniversary following the effective date of the agreement whereby both parties will have various options?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure this afternoon to introduce Mr. David Karwacki, Leader of the Saskatchewan Liberal Party, and his assistant, Ian Burgess.

Now he's fresh from campaigning in the by-election at Carrot River. As you know, Mr. Speaker, Liberal support has been surging in provincial elections across the country — in Quebec and in New Brunswick and of course in Manitoba where Liberal support recently doubled. So we're expecting that these results will continue in Carrot River Valley.

And I ask all members to please join me in welcoming Mr. Karwacki.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the legislature, 36 students from Lakeview School. The students are in grade 4. They're accompanied by their teacher, Ms. Marian Ready. They're sitting in the west gallery.

The also have chaperones with them — Mr. Hillier, Ms. Willis-Camp, Mrs. Lyons, Mrs. Savage, and Ms. Stephanson.

And one of the students in this class, Nicki Murray, is a cousin of the Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Lynda Haverstock. And also Dr. Haverstock's aunt, Mrs. June Savage, is one of the chaperones today. So we have somebody who has . . . many kids who have a good connection with this institution but especially those children.

I'd like all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great, great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, 26 grade 10 to 12 students from Mossbank School seated in your east gallery, Mr. Speaker. The students are accompanied by teacher, Arnela Lawrence, and chaperone, Susan Howe.

I hope you have an informative and interesting afternoon here at your Legislative Assembly and in your Legislative Building, and I look forward to meeting with you later and I hope that all members will extend a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the hon. members in this Assembly two guests that are seated in your gallery. One is Angie Roe; she's the Saskatchewan Party candidate in Regina Elphinstone, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — The other is Chandra Carruthers. She is actually originally from Swift Current. She's currently a political studies student and she's very interested in politics and she is doing whatever she can to help ensure that Angie becomes the next MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) for Regina Elphinstone.

So I'd ask all members to welcome them to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

MacLean's Health Report

Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the June 16 edition of *Maclean's* magazine contains its fifth annual health report which provides a ranking of 57 Canadian health regions with populations of more than 125,000 people based on a series of selected health care indicators.

We're extremely pleased to report that in this report the Saskatoon Health Region ranked fourth overall and that the Regina Health Region ranked 16th. Saskatoon is ranked ahead of larger centres such as Calgary, Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa, while Regina outranks Vancouver.

Both of our regions scored particularly well on stroke survival — a critical indicator of in-hospital stroke treatment — in hip replacements, and in obstetrical care. As the Saskatchewan Health Quality Council said, this annual survey is, quote:

recognition of the . . . job both [regions] are doing in delivering health services. This is a good news story that recognizes the many things that we are doing right in organizing and delivering care here in our province.

(13:45)

The *Maclean's* report is an indication that we should be proud of but not complacent about health care in our province. We're doing well, but we can do better.

I know all members will join me in congratulating and thanking the excellent teams of women and men who work in each of the health regions to bring us the best quality health care possible.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Teacher Assistant Certificate Program

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Saturday I had the privilege of attending the first teacher assistance certificate program hosted by the Southeast Regional College. The significance of this program, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that the Kelsey SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) institute has put together a program that can be offered in rural Saskatchewan so that young men and women have the opportunity of enhancing their education and their work opportunities.

At this graduation we had 10 young women taking the course

and I was informed by instructor, Mr. Gerry Joynt, that this course is not a Mickey Mouse course, that it takes a lot of work, a lot of dedication. And I was also informed that one of the graduates is actually passing with a 97 per cent grade in the course.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the graduates for their hard work, their dedication. A special thank you to the Southeast Regional College and the staff for hosting this program and I wish them well in their future endeavours.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

16th Annual Regina Children's Festival

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the 16th annual Regina Children's Festival begins tomorrow and runs through until Saturday. The festival is being held at Regina Exhibition Park which will now be the permanent location for the event as it provides lots of space, good facilities, and not the least important, makes the festival less susceptible to the vagaries of weather.

International headline entertainers Aché Brasil will perform on Thursday and Friday with their high-energy acrobatics, martial arts, and Afro-Brazilian dances. And the Saskatoon-based a cappella group HOJA will perform on Saturday. Other entertainers, Mr. Speaker, include CLarOL the Clown; one-man variety show, Clark Robertson; Les Bûcherons, a duo who perform folk songs using a variety of traditional and unusual instruments; and Winston and Ed who perform in Cree, English, and French.

No, Mr. Speaker, I do not see on the list of performers our hon. member from North Battleford, but perhaps they could get lucky next year.

There will also be a craft tent, a sound tent, and an interactive work stage.

Mr. Speaker, the Children's Festival is fun and educational, providing kids with opportunities to experience live entertainment and a wide range of cultural activities that would otherwise be unavailable to them. I'm sure all members of the Assembly will join me in wishing success to everyone involved in this year's festival.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Rolling Stones Concert

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week it was announced that the Rolling Stones will be giving a concert in Toronto. The concert was planned as a means of stimulating Toronto's sagging tourist industry in the wake of the SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome) outbreak. The Government of Canada has agreed to contribute 3.5 million and the Government of Ontario, 2 million.

Those who have been laid off work or have cattle they can't market due to the outbreak of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) must be scratching their heads at the news that the federal and Ontario governments have together committed

over \$5 million for a rock concert.

I agree that the SARS outbreak demands serious action. The collapse of the Ontario tourist industry would not benefit us. Nonetheless, the refusal of the federal government to waive the two-week waiting period for EI (employment insurance) for laid-off workers in the beef industry must be seen as cold-hearted.

Jane Stewart and her colleagues will remember . . . must remember that their responsibilities are to the whole of the country and to all Canadians — not just those who live in the Golden Horseshoe.

Likewise, Western provincial governments will have to recognize that both the federal and Ontario governments have been working together to limit the damage to Toronto's economy. Ontario has not taken the position that the whole problem is for Ottawa alone.

The Prime Minister has promised to study the request for a special \$400 million aid package to the Western beef industry. I hope he does, otherwise there will be many questioning Ottawa's priorities in funding a concert in Toronto by some aging rockers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SIAST Graduates

Ms. Lorjé: — Mr. Speaker, this year 3,000 SIAST students will be graduating from more than 200 programs in business, agriculture, health and science, technology, industrial training, hospitality services, community services, and basic education.

This is good news because past history tell us that more than 90 per cent of SIAST graduates available for work will be employed; more significantly, 92 per cent of those graduates will be working in Saskatchewan.

Just for the record, Mr. Speaker, 97 per cent of these students rated their SIAST program as good to excellent. Mr. Speaker, SIAST provides an invaluable post-secondary education for its students. This is good news for our economy.

I know all members will join me in congratulating the Kelsey, Palliser, Wascana, and Woodlands SIAST students as they move successfully from the classroom to the workplace.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to congratulate my good friend and former neighbour, Penny Hodgson. Not only is she this year's outstanding graduate in SIAST's vet tech course, she has accepted employment at a local Saskatoon veterinarian clinic — proof positive of the value of SIAST and its solid track record of training Saskatchewan people for Saskatchewan jobs. For SIAST students, Mr. Speaker, the future is wide open in Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Montmartre School Becomes Environmental Earth School

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to recognize a school in my constituency and the students of that school.

The students of Montmartre School celebrated reaching the level of an Environmental Earth School, which is a project through the SEEDS (Society, Environment & Energy Development Studies) program that the school has taken part of for the last number of years.

To reach the level of Earth School, students must complete 1,000 or more environmental projects. They have ongoing projects which include recycling cans, bottles, papers, and campground cleanup. They have also taken part in some special ongoing programs like creating terrariums in different biomes, visiting burrowing owls, and doing reports on endangered species.

This is a tremendous achievement for both students of Montmartre and the community as a whole. The Hon. Lynda Haverstock was on hand to congratulate the students, and at this time I would also like to add my congratulations to the students and staff of the Montmartre School for reaching Earth School status.

Your commitment to this project is an example for us all. Please join me in congratulating the students of Montmartre School.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Shackleton Project

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday people from communities throughout southwest Saskatchewan gathered in Cabri to mark the one-year anniversary of the Shackleton Project and this incredible Saskatchewan success story.

As all members will know, Mr. Speaker, the success of this partnership between TransGas, the pipeline transmission company of SaskEnergy, and Calgary-based companies Profico Energy Management, Husky Energy, and Cavell Energy has exceeded even the most optimistic of industry expectations. The region is now responsible for more than 12 per cent of Saskatchewan's daily natural gas production.

Our government's initial investment in this project — \$9 million by TransGas to extend its pipeline network into this area — has allowed access by producers and helped to spur record gas well drilling throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, the Sask Party members should listen to what Alberta-based companies are saying about Saskatchewan. Companies like Profico and Cavell are investing here because of what they call the Saskatchewan advantage. Our improved royalty structure, our abundant resources, and our business-friendly investment climate are bringing jobs and revenue to this province.

Mr. Speaker, our future is truly wide open. The people who were in Cabri know it, the energy companies in Calgary know it, and the people of this great province know it too. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — To ask for leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to welcome a group of very special people that travelled many, many miles to be here today. In the west gallery, we have 17 grade 8 students from my hometown of Ile-a-la-Crosse. They are accompanied by Mr. Morin, Mrs. April Morin, Mr. Howard Morin, and Ms. Pam Favel.

And certainly I want to give a very special welcome to all the young kids for travelling that long journey to come to see their MLA and their local hockey hero at work here in the Assembly. I also want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we did play hockey against their chaperone, Mr. Morin, R.J. Morin, and Roger wasn't as fast and shifty as me but he certainly was on my line at one time.

And I want to thank the chaperones and all the kids for travelling many, many miles to be here today. And I would ask all members of the Assembly to welcome this very special group of grade 8 students travelling all the way from Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, as the member of Cumberland, I too would like to . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Is leave granted to the member of Cumberland.

Leave granted.

Mr. Goulet: — Mr. Speaker, it's a great pleasure for me to join the member from Athabasca to welcome the students from Ile-a-la-Crosse, from sakitawahk and also to say to them in Cree, Ta wow.

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

I am telling them, Mr. Speaker, that it is a pleasure for them to be here and that indeed to watch the proceedings as usual. And I'd like the guests again to . . . welcome, give them a special welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Consequences of Occurrence of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. It's encouraging to hear that the Western premiers and representatives from the beef industry developed a

workable emergency compensation package designed to address the short-term difficulties facing the industry as a result of the BSE case discovered a few weeks ago in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I would assume that the Premier's prepared a written proposal for the federal government detailing the compensation package.

My question, Mr. Speaker: would the Premier confirm this as the case and table a copy of the document for the benefit of all Saskatchewan legislators?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, in concert with the industry and with the other Western provinces and territories the package was put together and has been presented to the federal government. We have no difficulty in sharing that proposal with this legislature.

Although it has been proposed, it's not a Saskatchewan proposal or an Alberta proposal or a British Columbia proposal or a Manitoba proposal or a territorial — it is a proposal from the Western premiers and we're very happy to provide that.

If I may say, Mr. Speaker, that is the power of the proposal, is that it is not from one jurisdiction. It is the united voice of every Western Canadian province and territory, the united voice calling upon the national government to participate with us in bringing some relief, some relief to this very beleaguered industry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I'm pleased to hear the Premier say that this proposal is a broadly supported proposal and I'm pleased that he will be tabling it so we can add our support to the proposal that is being delivered to Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, the fact that there is an emergency compensation package being presented by the Western provinces in the beef industry is encouraging.

But nevertheless the federal government has not categorically said that it is prepared to offer any more assistance other than what is already planned under the agricultural policy framework program or a loan guarantee program. Although the federal government has agreed to a meeting of Agriculture ministers this Friday, there has been no other public expression of support for the emergency assistance package from them.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier is indicating in the press that this is pretty much a done deal. What indication has he received from the federal government that they will in fact support and finance this BSE compensation package, that this will be more than just a meeting?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I desperately wish I could report to the Leader of the Opposition in this House today that this was a done deal. It is not a done deal. But it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that no national government in Canada could look at the circumstance that's facing the livestock industry in this country and not respond, Mr. Speaker — and not respond.

We have laid on the table what we think is a very responsible, workable, temporary relief package. It is almost without question that a national government would respond in a positive way.

With the Leader of the Opposition, and let me state the position of this government very clearly, this must be more than the reliance on existing programs. It must be much more than, it must be much more than support for those who have seen their herds slaughtered, although the compensation must be there for them. It must be much more than some process of loan guarantees. It must be a response from Canadians to support — temporarily support — this essential industry not only to our food supply but to our balance of payments and exports and to our economy across Canada.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And we agree 100 per cent with the Premier that it must be more than all of the things he indicated. And that's why we're pleased that he's prepared to table that agreement so that we can also lend our support and reinforce the message that Ottawa must come forth with a new, comprehensive package soon. Because, Mr. Speaker, whatever form that compensation might take on a Friday, it needs to take place this Friday because the news of yet another meeting and further work on a compensation package into the future will not pay the bills that are due today.

Mr. Speaker, if Friday's meeting with the federal minister goes well and if the federal government comes to the table prepared to finance a program, it will be important that the wheels are then put in motion very quickly. Even then for some people, the aid may already be too late.

Mr. Speaker, if all goes well, will the Premier explain when the intended recipients of the money from this emergency compensation package might actually see the money that can save their industry?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well given — given, Mr. Speaker — that we are anticipating that the federal Minister of Agriculture will be coming to the meeting on Friday with a positive response, in that circumstance I think it should only take a matter of days to begin the process that we've engaged the industry in.

The industry has agreed to a proposal which would take the fed cattle and begin to move them to slaughter and market, selected by the industry — not by government but selected by the industry — to ensure an orderly process of return to market. It would take, I assume, some time for the industry to begin that process.

But for the public dollars to flow in to support the price difference, the loss that the fed cattle has shown since May to now, should take but a very, very short period of time. There may be some period of time that the process would have to be put together by the industry, and we would understand that, as

I'm sure all would. But essentially with a good response from Ottawa on Friday, this program should be underway very, very quickly.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well with the Premier, we're looking forward to a bankable program that will be announced this Friday.

But while an emergency compensation package might help some of the industry survive — and we hope that it will — nothing would be more beneficial than to have the border to the United States reopened so that Canadian beef can again cross the border.

The CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) is expected to have their final report completed this week. The international panel of scientists has been asked to speed up the presentation of their written review of the BSE investigation.

But there is still yet no indication from the United States when we might see trade resume. Yet the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker, continues to say that he is optimistic that this trade will resume soon. And we want to know, Mr. Speaker, what date is soon?

Will the Premier tell us what indication he has had from the United States that they are going to lift the ban, even partially, and how soon?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I think we all want to remain optimistic about the lift on the border ban. That is, that is the key and the only long-term solution to the crisis that faces our industry.

There is no amount of compensation that can sustain the industry in the long term. Only trade and export of our great Canadian beef and our great Saskatchewan beef will suffice to support and see the industry prosper and expand.

We all wish and we all have optimism and would want to share optimism that the border will open soon. But I think the fact of the matter is, indications over the last 24 hours, some of us were . . . It's been reported to me that the Secretary of Agriculture of the United States was speaking publicly last evening and not indicating that this is going to happen very soon.

I listened carefully to one of the senators from North Dakota in our own rotunda yesterday who, while I was watching from Kelowna, did not give me a lot of encouragement that there will be quick movement on that American border.

We have the science in place. We have the science in place. We'll have that official work done that can be turned over, and we're going to have to I think use every mechanism possible to us to ensure that that science influences the decision makers across the 49th parallel.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the minister of Liquor and Gaming. In a story in today's *StarPhoenix*, FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) vice-chief, Guy Lonechild, is saying the NDP (New Democratic Party) government was largely responsible for SIGA's (Saskatchewan Indian Gaming Authority) scandal involving \$800,000 of misspending by Dutch Lerat. Chief Lonechild said, and I quote:

The province was regulating SIGA and they approved all the expenses.

Mr. Speaker, that is a very serious allegation. If government officials approved the expenses, that means the NDP was complicit in misspending of 800,000 taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, how many senior officials at SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority) knew about Dutch Lerat's trips on the Concorde and his outrageous expenditures, and why did they approve these expenditures?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to respond to the question, Mr. Speaker. And Vice-Chief Lonechild's comments that have been reported into the newspapers this morning are disappointing and somewhat concerning.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, let me point out that I want to reiterate to the member opposite, to the people of the province, all the benefits that SIGA has provided for First Nations and our communities.

The financial mismanagement, Mr. Speaker, that occurred at SIGA prior to June 2000 has been very well documented. The Provincial Auditor identified the issues, Mr. Speaker. Problems were documented through an independent audit of the entire process. The Provincial Auditor issued a report making detailed recommendations to address the problems at SIGA.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to once again point out and underline for all the people of this province, SIGA and SLGA adopted all the recommendations of the Provincial Auditor and have been working together to implement those changes.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Guy Lonechild of the FSIN says not only did the government know about Dutch Lerat's outrageous expenses, they approved them. Chief Lonechild says, and I quote:

The province was regulating SIGA and they approved all the expenses.

They approved all the expenses, Mr. Speaker. That means the government approved the misspending of \$800,000 by Dutch Lerat on sports cars and trips around the world.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister admit that his NDP government knew and approved of these outrageous expenses and if so, why was nothing done to stop them?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as we all know, and people that do listen to news reports, they have recognized that there are conflicting statements, Mr. Speaker.

I want to just reiterate once again for the benefit of that member and for the people of this province the significant changes that have been made at SIGA.

And specifically and for the benefit of that member, Mr. Speaker, I want to outline all the documented changes and benefits that have accrued in order that everything at SIGA has been changed: the adoption of a new board; new composition structure, Mr. Speaker; new CEO (chief executive officer) and chief financial officer which, by the way, has been applauded as one of the leading CEOs in the gaming industry who reduced all the expenditures at SIGA and virtually doubled the . . . 33 per cent of profits increased as a result of all those changes, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — Saskatchewan Justice, Saskatchewan Justice decided not to charge Dutch Lerat because neither Lerat nor any other SIGA official tried to hide anything. That means that Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming must have known what was going on. They must have known about the expensive sports cars and the trips on the Concorde and they chose, Mr. Speaker, they chose to do nothing. And now that's exactly why Chief Lonechild is saying, he said the province was regulating SIGA and they approved all the expenses.

Mr. Speaker, that's an extremely serious allegation but it seems to be consistent with what the Department of Justice is saying.

Mr. Speaker, which government officials knew about these improper expenditures? Did the minister know? Did senior officials know? And who knew and why did they choose to do nothing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to that member and I hope she's listening — SLGA did not approve Mr. Dutch Lerat's expenses, Mr. Speaker.

Now let me once again reiterate what took place when there were discrepancies discovered. SLGA ordered a special audit which comprehensively reviewed issues at SIGA. The Provincial Auditor has conducted his audit on this file and duly reported in November of . . . The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police), Mr. Speaker, the national police force, the police force that polices this province and investigates commercial crime frauds and on and on, investigated this file. The Justice department also reviewed this file and made its decision.

Are the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, and particularly the member from Big Muddy, questioning the process of the Provincial Auditor, the RCMP investigation, and our Justice department? Certainly seems like that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — As recent as the fall of last year, the Provincial Auditor was still maintaining that there was inappropriate spending of public funds by SIGA. This is not from 2000; this is from 2002. And we seem to be getting two different stories here, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP has maintained they knew nothing about Dutch Lerat's misspending until it was revealed by the Provincial Auditor. However Guy Lonechild said the province was regulating SIGA and they approved all the expenses. And the Justice department seems to be saying the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, who is telling the truth? Can the minister say with absolute certainty that no one in his NDP government knew about Dutch Lerat's improper expenses before they came out in the auditor's report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that when there were some discrepancies discovered, SLGA initiated an audit, Mr. Speaker.

And I know that the member from Thunder Creek is asking for the question to be answered and I will answer the question. And he knows full well as do all, I think, that there had been some conflicting reports, Mr. Speaker. I don't think they can deny that.

You know, I just want to point out I'm a little bit taken aback by the attack once again from the opposition, from the Saskatchewan Party, on SIGA, when they know full well that SIGA casinos create significant economic spinoffs for a number of communities, Mr. Speaker, and their profits that go to support charities throughout this province.

And the Leader of the Opposition is hollering from his chair. Well he's the guy that said, and I want to quote, Mr. Hermanson delivered to the FSIN a speech in February 2002, saying:

Hermanson praised the FSIN for running a successful gaming business and complimented it for addressing "governance challenges" at SIGA . . ."

Do they not speak to one another, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Bakken: — That is exactly the point that we have been making for three years is that it is the responsibility of this government and Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming to ensure that the dollars generated from Liquor and Gaming flow to the First Nations people because they are dependent on these dollars. And this government has been negligent in making sure that that happens.

Mr. Speaker, I did not hear a clear answer from the minister. Can the minister say with absolute certainty that no government official knew about Dutch Lerat's outrageous expenditures and that no one in the NDP government knew before it came out in the auditor's report?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well I've already said, Mr. Speaker — I don't know how much more clearly or in what language I should say it — that SLGA did not approve Dutch Lerat's expenses, Mr. Speaker. I've already reiterated — maybe I should do it again — the four major, major steps that were taken. SLGA ordered the special audit which comprehensively reviewed all the issues at SIGA, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think I need to repeat it again, but I do want to repeat one more comment from the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party who obviously does not have his members pay any attention to what he thinks or what he says. And I'm going to just quote:

(Mr. Hermanson said, he believes) . . . the financial success of . . . (SIGA) is one of the great and largely untold business success stories in Saskatchewan.

. . . I am impressed with the direct and business-like approach both SIGA and FSIN have taken in addressing the governance challenges . . .

That from the Leader of the Opposition, whose member obviously doesn't believe him.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, the minister of Gaming refuses to give a clear answer. And what is the minister saying? Is he accusing the FSIN of not telling the truth about what went on in this situation? Is that what the minister is saying?

Mr. Speaker, the Justice department made its decision in March not to charge Dutch Lerat because they said no one was hiding these expenses. That clearly suggests that government officials must have known it.

Now Guy Lonechild is saying not only did the government know about these expenses, they approved of them.

Mr. Speaker, what steps is the minister taking to find out which government official knew about Dutch Lerat's outrageous expenditures and who approved them? Did the minister of Liquor and Gaming approve these expenditures?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I don't know how much more clearly and precisely I can explain all the investigative processes that were followed in determining what the problems were at SIGA about misspending.

Mr. Speaker, what that member is saying — no confidence in the justice system. But that's quite understandable. No confidence in FSIN or in SIGA, Mr. Speaker. I don't understand it when her leader, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, the member for Rosetown-Biggan applauds the sincere efforts of SIGA.

Mr. Speaker, we're proud of our agreement we signed with

First Nations. We work together; we're going to improve the lots of all the people in this province by working together in a partnership, not continually questioning and attacking the efforts of people to try and make life better for all the communities in this great province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Municipal Revenue-Sharing Grants

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question's also for the Minister of Government Relations.

Last week the Minister of Highways, the NDP member from Regina Qu'Appelle Valley distributed a brochure accusing the city of Regina of not telling the truth about revenue-sharing grants. And the NDP member then did what he does best — he provided totally inaccurate information about the NDP's broken municipal revenue-sharing promises.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP claims the city of Regina will receive about \$13 million in revenue-sharing grants this year. But Mayor Pat Fiacco says the city's revenue-sharing grant will be just 7.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: who's lying and who's telling the truth?

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the member to just rephrase his last question omitting the offensive word.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rephrase my question. And once again, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: who are we to believe, Mr. Speaker? How much is the urban revenue-sharing grant for the city of Regina this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I guess if there's being . . . we're being questioned of not providing the proper answers, we should also be asking the opposition and questioning what they base their facts on and whether those facts are factual. Because in most cases they're not, Mr. Speaker.

Urban revenue sharing . . .

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

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Mr. Speaker, urban revenue sharing was increased to \$36.714 million in 2003-2004. This means an increase of 1.2 million in Regina's unconditional revenue-sharing grant — unconditional.

In 2003-04, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs will provide 13.255 million in total transfer payments to Regina — in total. That's \$13,255,980. That's in total, Mr. Speaker.

It's capital funding, centenary funding. Federal funding will also be provided through the Regina . . . through CSIP (Canada-Saskatchewan Infrastructure Program) programs. Unconditional finding as well . . . funding, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a very straightforward question. All the minister has to do is open his briefing book and it'll show him that it's \$7.9 million. That's what the mayor of Regina is saying. Revenue sharing is \$7.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, who are we to believe once again — the council of Regina, the aldermen of Regina, the mayor of Regina, or that member from Qu'Appelle Valley, or the minister? If I had my choice, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll take the mayor of Regina and the aldermen.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Bjornerud: — Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the public of Saskatchewan then, and to the people of Regina, why is Mayor Pat Fiacco saying it's only \$7.9 million?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if there's a question of integrity, I think that some people across the floor should look in the mirror, because they're only looking at one portion of the total amounts.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to send the member the document showing an accounting for all the money, all the money that goes to municipalities, and to the city of Regina, and to the city of Saskatoon, and North Battleford, and Yorkton, and Melville, and Saltcoats, and everywhere else, Mr. Speaker. I'm not at all behind the door to do that. That will not even include what we're talking about, the 5 per cent surcharge on some utilities that the cities pick up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll be happy to send . . . to get the information to the member. I'll be happy to do that, Mr. Speaker. We've got nothing to hide.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the Government Deputy House Leader on his feet?

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, to request leave to introduce a guest.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the willingness of the House to provide a moment to introduce a guest who's, I just noticed, is seated in your gallery, who is a good friend of this Assembly and good friend of parliamentary democracy both in our province and our nation.

I see in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, Gordon Barnhart, who many of us will know is a former Clerk of the Saskatchewan House who left Saskatchewan to proceed to the Senate in . . . here in Canada to serve the Clerk's table there, and now serves as secretary at the University of Saskatchewan. I think it's also in

his capacity in the academic world now that I suspect brings him here today in his relationship with the internship program.

We will also know him as an author of some acclaim and growing acclaim here in our Saskatchewan. He authored a book — if I remember correctly the title was *Peace, Progress and Prosperity* — about the first premier of Saskatchewan, Walter Scott. And I have located on my table in my office these days a new book entitled, I think the correct title is *Building for the Future*, about the history of the building of this great building in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask that all hon. members welcome a great friend of the legislature of Saskatchewan, Gordon Barnhart.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, with leave to also introduce guests.

Leave granted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the minister in welcoming Gordon Barnhart and guest to the Assembly today.

As the minister was saying, Gordon Barnhart is a good friend of this legislature and democracy, and helped institute the internship program that we now have in this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. An internship program which brings to this legislature good, dedicated, impartial, very — and this was a concern we had — very attuned to the confidentiality necessities of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. Just as the rest of the Legislative Assembly staff are, Mr. Speaker, including the Pages. They take their duties very professionally and they are very much sensitive to the impartial needs of all of the members of this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. And we'd like to welcome Mr. Barnhart to the Assembly again today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Saskatchewan School Improvements

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to inform you and all hon. members of 56 new school improvements which will take place across Saskatchewan this year.

Yesterday, the Department of Learning issued this year's first release of block capital approvals. In total, this list represents more than 6 million in department contributions.

Block capital projects are those capital improvements valued under \$500,000. They are essential upgrades responding to demands for roof repair, structural upgrades, electrical and mechanical projects, safety improvements, and increased space. And we know that these projects are of very significant value to the schools and school divisions involved. They're designed to keep our schools safe and healthy for our students, while ensuring they have the best possible space to learn.

One significant project is in Balgonie where funding will go toward classroom renovation, a new science lab, staff area, and resource centre. Mr. Speaker, the sights and sounds of construction will be taking place across Saskatchewan this year — from North Battleford to Rose Valley to Lampman.

In my hometown of Saskatoon, six schools will see either renovations or additions. These upgrades include a new gym at Montgomery School, a new multi-purpose room at Lakeridge School, and the addition of portables to Mother Teresa School.

I had the pleasure of opening Montgomery School and I know what a difference these improvements will make in the lives of students. At Montgomery, the projects will include not only a new gym but new classrooms, a new work area for teachers, and an improved library.

In Regina, three schools will see improvements at a cost of \$410,000.

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. I just want to wait for things to calm down so I can properly hear the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Regina, three schools will see improvements at a cost of \$410,000. These improvements include a new portable classroom at Dr. Martin LeBoldus High School, foundation upgrades at Campbell Collegiate, and a project to provide wheelchair accessibility at Thom Collegiate.

In Swift Current, improvements include the addition of two portable classrooms, a new conference area, and new washrooms at St. Patrick Elementary School.

Gull Lake, Yorkton, and Churchbridge schools will all see renovations this year, Mr. Speaker.

In total, 56 projects were announced with yesterday's release, and we expect to approve an additional 70 to 80 projects during the year.

And while I can't list every approved project today, rest assured that we recognize the value of and the need for all of these improvements. These projects are to be cost shared with the local school divisions. Working with our partners in the school divisions, we are building for the future of the province by providing our students with the educational facilities that they need.

I want to thank our partners in the education sector for their continued work on behalf of the children and learners of our province. I want to recognize the hard work of the Department of Learning in providing excellent service to school divisions and all education stakeholders.

Mr. Speaker, we are building for the future by laying the foundation of a good education and strong education capital. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, and to the minister, to respond to

the ministerial statement by the Minister of Learning.

I'd like to thank the minister, firstly, for the advance copy of this statement. And on behalf of all the schools and trustees and students that are involved in the announcement, are able to get some funding now for these schools, and I'd like to thank on their behalf as well; not only for the money but for taking the anxiety out of waiting to learn when their project is going to be approved again.

I know the minister is well aware that trustees and teachers and parents do an incredible job in educating our children, and they have a lot of obstacles, and most of them are to do with money and the fact that funding hasn't usually kept up with the cost.

It's also a concern around timing. Cash-strapped boards who are trying to make . . . trying to do maintenance and renovations have to wait for months to learn the fate of their proposals.

In the past the Minister of Learning have often used these opportunity to hand out money to school divisions by going out to the schools and to get a formal thank you. That's basically fine but it takes time, and school boards really would have more of an opportunity to do their tendering and to do some forward planning if they knew well in advance.

Really what we need is a two- or three-year rolling budget so we know what's happening well in advance and the boards can make a payment, their decisions, and their plans a lot better; it would save them money.

So on behalf of the people that have received the money today, we do thank you, but we do encourage the minister to take further steps to find out what ways they can be helping the boards with the few dollars they do have and to let the boards know well in advance when they're going to have an approval.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 43 — The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2003

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 43, The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2003 be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

(14:30)

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a response to written question no. 717.

The Speaker: — Tabled.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes (Security Management) Amendment Act, 2003

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Today actually we're joined by a number of officials from different departments as this is a miscellaneous statutes Act that contains changes to a number of different pieces of legislation. So I'll introduce a fairly large number of officials who are here to provide answers in case the questions are asked on specific issues.

Seated next to me is Tim Epp, who is the Crown counsel for legislative services in the Department of Justice. Directly behind me is the executive director of protection emergency services for the Department of Corrections and Public Safety, Tom Young. Sitting next to him is Dr. Ross Findlater, the chief medical health officer with the Department of Health. Just behind me is Ron Wallace, the director of health registration and vital statistics for the Department of Health.

And then also in the Chamber, seated behind the bar are Doug Walton, the acting manager of legislation and legal services for Saskatchewan Environment; Ralph Paragg, the acting manager of information and regulatory services for the Department of Highways; Bernadette McIntyre, the assistant vice-president, driver and vehicle safety services, Sask Government Insurance; and Myron Sereda, the director of engineering services branch with the Department of Industry and Resources.

Clause 1

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to the minister and his officials. The nature of this Bill obviously means you have a lot of officials because we'll be going all over the place with this particular Bill.

Going through it in a fairly orderly manner though, the first section deals with charitable fundraising, and I would just like for the minister to explain exactly what is being tried to accomplish in this section on charitable fundraising?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I'd like to thank the member for the question. There's been a lot of attention in the media over the last several months about charitable organizations who are often suspected, or may be suspected, of fundraising and then using those funds to support terrorist organizations. This section of the Bill largely attempts to accomplish the same thing that the federal legislation has tried to do in terms of identifying dealing with charitable groups or organizations that may use the mantle of a charitable group to fundraise for a terrorist organization.

Mr. Heppner: — Okay, thank you. The answer seems to indicate that there's definitely a concern in this particular province, and I'm wondering is this a result of a concern that was raised due to what's happening in other provinces or has there actually been a problem in Saskatchewan with fundraising of that sort that this is trying to address?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. The member's question, I think, highlights in many ways an overriding set of issues that we're dealing with in this Bill.

While there's no specific set of instances in Saskatchewan that we're aware of where charitable organizations have been involved in fundraising for terrorist activities or are linked to them, nevertheless this legislation anticipates or provides us with avenues to deal with it in the case that something like this would happen.

The federal government has enacted legislation to deal with it. Alberta has enacted legislation which is similar. I would anticipate other provinces will come along in the same way.

But the member highlights an important set of issues that a lot of this legislation is largely preventative. It enables us to dictate a response before we are in a crisis situation. And so that is largely, as we go through this Bill, what I think the member will find.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. In part III, the section dealing with The Clean Air Act in 24(1), there's some talk about immunity. And that's always an interesting phrase when that shows up. And I'm wondering exactly what that immunity section is all about. Who's going to be immune from whatever is happening there, and why?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I'm advised that The Clean Air Act did not contain this provision previously, as other pieces of legislation that this Assembly has dealt with does. And what this particular amendment will do is provide a relatively standard clause that we have found in other legislation be added into The Clean Air Act.

To specifically answer the member's question, the immunity is granted to the Crown when it has acted in good faith. Obviously this is open to court interpretation, but nevertheless is . . . that's the purpose behind it.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Part IV deals with Dangerous Goods Transportation Act, and much as the first section that we talked about, it also deals with terrorist activities and is directed at that whole area.

The one question that I do have is there's some reference there to fines and penalties, and I'm just wondering are these new fines and penalties or are they a change in the size of those fines and penalties? And because we don't have the old section there, from what level have they been raised?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, I'm advised that this section is a new one and as such, there were not previously fines in place before for this type of activity.

The concern that's being addressed in this section of the Bill is around the transportation of dangerous goods that may be used for a terrorist activity. It's very specific in that particular, particular set of provisions.

I think, as all of us know, in Saskatchewan there are a number of dangerous goods that are hauled on our roadways. And part of what will be important in the interpretation of this Act

overall is making sure there's a clear understanding of the difference between a terrorist-related activity, ordinary — I don't want to say ordinary criminal activity — but more standard type of misuse, or in just a general use of general dangerous goods hauling.

This is one of those things that we have articulated with a separate clause. There will be additionally be, as we go through the Bill — and it was one of the things that I should have perhaps made more clear in the second reading speech — that while the Bill addresses in a large part terrorist-related activity and preventative measures as well as procedures to deal with it, there are provisions in this Bill that also deal with additional powers that may be invoked in times of emergency. And I think as we move further into the Bill that we will see some of that.

A lot of this will obviously be dependent upon interpretation. As I listened to the debate in this Assembly during the second reading phase, I know that a lot of members on the opposition had highlighted this. This is certainly a key set of issues we addressed in our caucus as well.

And so I think as we deal with this, certainly provisions are in some ways broad, but we believe that they're there to provide us with sufficient leeway to deal with these kind of extraordinary situations.

Mr. Heppner: — Well thank you. Moving on to section 6. Now section 6 does exactly what the minister referred to, and that is involving the concept of an emergency as well as a terrorist activity.

In section 6 you have a new organization, which is Saskatchewan emergency management organization. We've been used to acting under the Saskatchewan emergency planning unit. Does this replace that? Is it in addition to it? Or is it just a renaming of the old organization?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — We've undertaken this set of changes for two reasons. One is to reflect more what this organization deals with. It used to be the emergency planning group. It's not now simply dealing with planning, it also deals with crisis management and emergency issues response within the department and the interdepartmental way. So this reflects part of the change in that organization.

We've also adopted the name that's in use largely across Canada and much of North America for emergency measures organizations.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. There's also in section 6, I believe, changes to . . . No, section 7, environmental management and protection. There's also some sections dealing with possible acts of terrorism. And I'm wondering exactly what the concerns are that brought about section 7.

(14:45)

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, this section of the Act deals with changes to EMPA, The Environmental Management and Protection Act, and it allows us to deal with crisis situations, emergency situations, where we need to move around what might otherwise be considered the normal process

or protocol in terms of dealing with waterworks or things that are maybe outside of normal provincial control but under other municipal control.

And so what we have allowed here is a set of statutory changes which will allow us to act quickly to deal with a potential crisis situation. That's largely what this section of the Act does and as such it is more preventative in terms of nature but tries to respond to the ability for government to move quickly in the case of a threat.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Then we get to parts 8 and 9. I think these are the ones that are always the frightening ones in that whenever there's an emergency there tends to be a diminishing of freedoms and privacy and all those sorts of things. And when we look at section 8 and 9, I am wondering what the minister can say to alleviate fears that are obviously out there that in case of any kind of emergency, people's rights and freedoms and privacies are taken away and destroyed and sometimes we know when they're going to come back.

So I'd like the minister to give some reassurances to the people of this province that under 8 and 9 we're not going to have a Big Brother.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well the member's quite right. This is, of all the changes that are happening in terms of security framework legislation across the country, this is certainly among the most contentious set of those changes. But because this is where we start to run into the need for us to be able to share across provincial borders in a secure way and a secretive way, an ability to share intelligence information back and forth, this has been a subject of a great deal of debate in parliament around the Anti-terrorism Act of 2001. This is a part of the debate that's going on around the Public Safety Act in parliament.

We believe that while the changes do provide for a greater degree of . . . I would say security, others may say secrecy, within terms of dealing with maintenance of private information, the fact is that this under our legislation will still be available for review by the courts and the FOI (freedom of information) commissioner. But certainly as we have looked at this issue and we've debated it with my federal colleague, the Solicitor General, federally, this is a very significant set of issues.

We have tried to respond in a measured way with this in a way that still protects privacy rights and we have tried to narrow the scope down. This is one of those sections that is very clearly intended to be invoked around security issues only.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Mr. Minister, I'd like to move on to section 15 and that's with The Public Health Act. If we keep in mind, and as we said, this Bill deals not only with terrorism but also with other unforeseen acts that could cause some difficulties, some serious problems in our society.

Under section 15, we see that there's more power for the department to deal with situations probably such as SARS in Ontario. And I'm wondering if there are any specifics that this particular piece of legislation has that would make Saskatchewan more able to deal with emergencies such as

SARS or West Nile or whatever?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, the member is quite right that in fact this piece of the legislation, because of the timing of bringing it forward, we were able to take advantage of the lessons being learned in other provinces like Ontario around the SARS outbreak.

The most important provisions in this largely deal with quarantine provisions that allow the . . . make it very clear in terms of the province's responsibilities but also its ability to deal with quarantine issues.

There are additional measures in here that deal with other biological agents. As the member will know and members in this Assembly will know, we have had in this city two significant anthrax scares, one of which of course resulted in the evacuation of a government building last year. This allows us to deal with those kind of issues in the case that they become a real and serious threat.

But we were fortunate in the timing of this legislation to be able to take advantage of the lessons we've seen being learned in other jurisdictions.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. And, Mr. Chairman, that takes us to the end of the questions that we have on Bill No. 32.

The Chair: — Hon. members, this is a lengthy Bill. Is leave granted to deal with it by part . . . Oh, recognize the minister for wrap-up?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — If I might, there was one other set of questions that I've been asked around this particular Act on the identity theft issue that I want to make clear for members of the Assembly.

One of the issues that has been raised is what type of identity theft are we dealing with? Is this a case where some underage person borrows their older brother's ID (identification) to get into the bar, are they then stealing the identity? Clearly that's not what the intention of this Act is. And as we go through dealing with law enforcement agencies on educating them about the Act, we'll need to make sure that those normal provisions are dealt with in other legislation.

This contemplates more serious types of identity theft as we may have seen coming out of the ISM (Information Systems Management Corporation) hard drive situation. We were fortunate in that that there appears to have been no identity theft issues. But this would respond to that.

Clearly, if I may leave the members of the Assembly with one other overview that I think we need to stress here, and that is that clearly the police, prosecutors, the courts are going to need to be cautious and judicious in their use of this legislation. It is, I believe, a measured response. I don't believe it's a draconian one. But nevertheless I think we are going to have to be circumspect in terms of its use.

It is designed for a very specific set of circumstances throughout and that is something that we'll have to make sure through constant monitoring is in fact the case.

So I would like to thank the many officials who have joined us here today, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to thank the members of the opposition for their thoughtful comments in the second reading debates, as well as the questions of the member today.

The Chair: — Hon. members, this Bill has many clauses. Is leave granted to deal with it by part?

Leave granted.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 83 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

**Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes
(Security Management) Amendment Act, 2003 (No. 2)/
Loi corrective (gestion de la sécurité) de 2003 (n° 2)**

Clause 1

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I thought I had the same officials. Most of them have run off on me. So we're down to the two who know the most about this: Tim Epp, who is the Crown counsel with the Department of Justice, responsible for legislative services; and seated behind him is Ronn Wallace, the director of health registration and vital stats for the Department of Health.

Mr. Heppner: — Yes, Minister, and welcome again. As you commented, your ministers run away on you. It may be something you'll have to get used to. But anyways, Bill 33, part II is basically The Change of Name Act and I'm wondering what exactly is being changed there and why do we need that particular change of name.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, the change of name provisions . . . This Act deals with two things, change of name and vital statistics reporting. The change of name provisions are there largely to make provincially issued identity cards, drivers' licences, birth certificates, health cards, these kinds of issues, to make them more secure in terms of ensuring that the names on them are in fact associated with the individuals they're supposed to be.

It's part of a set of changes which are going on across the country and it's designed to make sure that provincially issued identity cards are in fact secure and not easily accessible to people with nefarious purposes, be they terrorist or otherwise.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you. Part III, Vital Statistics Act, section 15, has something to do with marriage. Is there anything in that section that members on that side of the House should know about?

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Chairman, sections 14 through 17

are, I believe, all identical provisions that strengthen the ability to make sure that the director who's issuing the identity is in fact able to verify that those are the individuals. It makes no substantive change to the definitions of any of these items.

(15:00)

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, and thank you to the minister and his officials, and that concludes the questions we have on that Bill as well.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 26 inclusive agreed to.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 32 — The Miscellaneous Statutes
(Security Management) Amendment Act, 2003**

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would move that Bill No. 32, The Miscellaneous Statutes (Security Management) Amendment Act, 2003, be now passed a third . . . now moved a . . . read a third time, read a third time and passed under its Act. Amazing what you can do without a script, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Bill No. 33 — The Miscellaneous Statutes
(Security Management) Amendment Act, 2003 (No. 2)/
Loi corrective (gestion de la sécurité) de 2003 (n° 2)**

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I am absolutely certain, Mr. Speaker, that I will move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

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

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

**General Revenue Fund
Health
Vote 32**

Subvote (HE01)

The Chair: — I 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 left, Glenda Yeates, the deputy minister. And to her left, Kelly Kummerfield, who is the executive director of health human resource planning. And directly behind me, Duncan Fisher, the assistant deputy minister. To Duncan's right, Bert Linklater, who is the

executive director of district management services. Then to my right, Rod Wiley, who is the executive director of finance and management services.

And then there are a number of other people who are at the back of the room who will help us, depending on the topic. So those are the people I have with me. Thanks.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair of Committees, and welcome this afternoon to the minister and to the officials from the Department of Health. Mr. Minister, I would like to take the opportunity for the next hour or so to cover a broad range of topics that I think are important to discuss, both because I think they are important issues to have in front of the people of Saskatchewan and to give the opportunity for the department to sort of outline its official position.

The first area that I want to talk about is the concern that I have and many have about the shortage of medical professionals and what plans are in place in order to take . . . or deal with this shortage.

First of all, Minister, there have been some increases for specifically registered nurse education training programs. We have moved from 260 current positions to 300 with the addition of 40 seats at the P.A. (Prince Albert) campus.

Mr. Minister, both the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association are calling for significant increases above that level. Could you tell me please what plans you have to further increase specifically the registered nurses training seats, registered nurses and registered psychiatric nurses, in that category?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — So thank you for that question. What happens in this particular area is that we obviously work with SRNA (Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association), SUN (Saskatchewan Union of Nurses), the management, and other places that hire staff. And right now we do have 300 positions for training RNs (registered nurse) and 176 positions for training LPNs (licensed practical nurse), and so that we have that kind of a education structure. We're just now in a point like we were in 1999 where we're getting a study based . . . looking at the whole needs in nursing over the coming years. Mr. Elliott has been preparing this and we anticipate getting that very shortly. That will set out the needs over the next number of years in the same way that '99 did and then we used that to expand the number of places.

As you would understand, the Department of Learning is actually in charge of setting up the various spots so we have to work together with the Department of Learning. But we anticipate that there is some . . . Well there's clearly a demand for the spaces but practically we want to make sure that it's in line with the projections within the workforce in Saskatchewan, taking into account obviously that some of our grads do go move to other places as well.

So right now the number that we do have is 300 on the RN side and 176 . . . RN and the RPN (registered psychiatric nurse) side — and 176 on the LPN side but that's under review right now.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Mr. Minister, I'm sure you're aware that

both the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and the Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association have written to you as they have to me and to all members, I believe, of the legislature, saying that they are calling for an immediate increase to 400 from the current 300 level. And it sounds like your response is to commission another study to look at and investigate the obvious.

The Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association have indicated that over the next five years some 3,500 nurses will be eligible for retirement and at that rate . . . And I think that with the workload nurses have in Saskatchewan right now, it is highly likely that every single one of those individuals will take their retirement when they're eligible for it.

That would indicate an outflow, if you like, due to retirement over the next five years of an average of over 600 nurses per year. I don't know why the minister has to take so much extra time to study what seems to be to everyone in the nursing profession and the health care profession something that is very obvious.

So instead of studying this further, why isn't the minister making recommendation to the Department of Learning to dramatically increase these available seats as soon as possible, rather than delaying at least another year's potential enrolment while they're studying the obvious?

(15:15)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well I beg to differ with the member's comments about what we are doing. We've been working on this study over the winter and around this particular issue because clearly it is something that we need to address.

What is going to be happening is, we'll going to be getting this report very shortly. It will deal with exactly the kinds of issues that have been raised about the numbers of nurses retiring, the numbers who will stay in the workforce in a part-time basis, and how you provide for some of that.

But I think that the important thing is that we get the information in as clear a way as possible, that we share it with all of the people who are involved — obviously we've got the unions and the Registered Nurses Association, the psych nurses, make sure we include the licensed practical nurses — so that we get the whole complement, the whole picture into place. And we will be working around increasing the number of nursing positions.

One of the challenges that we have is in training nurses in Saskatchewan. We end up having to make sure we have the capacity to do that. There's some ability to expand, using some of the existing facilities that we have now. But if there's a dramatic increase, it also means a fairly dramatic change in the kinds of space, resources, and the teachers — the people who are going to be the ones that provide the education. And we have to do all of these things together in a reasonable planned way.

We are doing that by listening and working and carefully planning, rather than just sort of increasing a huge number without seeing what effect it's going to have on the educational

institutions, on the professions, and on the whole situation. And so that's what we're doing, like we usually do, is working very carefully on this issue.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I too would like to beg to differ, Minister, because what you usually do is wait until it gets almost to a crisis before we deal with it and then it's much more difficult to remedy the situation.

Mr. Minister, certainly all of the issues you raise in terms of facilities and faculty and things of this nature are of course major concerns and challenges in order to get into place. And it's all going to take time anyway, and because you're delaying even making any initiatives, it's going to take even longer.

And as the minister should know, that if you started making the decision today, it's probably going to take four or five or maybe even six years before you actually have any outcomes at the end of the graduate program that are going to meet the increased numbers. So time becomes very important.

Mr. Minister, I have a note here from Chris Bailey, who you know is executive director and the registrar of the Licensed Practical Nurses.

And one of his comments about the fact that he says there's about 150 graduating — and I imagine the difference between the assigned number of seats and graduates are who actually complete the entire program — but he says, and I note here, that roughly 40 per . . . I'm sorry, roughly 70 per cent of LPNs are 40 years of age and older. And he goes on to say that in the near future more LPNs will be leaving the system annually than are being trained for replacement.

Minister, it seems is that every single person in the health care system from the registered nurses, SUN people, the licensed practical nurses — everybody knows that we're woefully short in the number of training seats. Everybody that is except the Department of Health and yourself.

And I wonder why you can continue to justify these delays because you have to realize it's going to take time to have graduates coming out of any of these programs once the decision to increase numbers according to the information coming from all of these professional associations are achieved.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Chair, the department is not unaware of the challenge. We're working at it in a very careful way. The number of graduates, total nursing graduates in the province in the year 2000-2001 was 167. So that was . . . It was in 1999 we got the study. That year there were 134. Well basically at that point the decision was made we have to increase dramatically the number of spaces; so we did.

So the next year, 2001-2002 — and this includes nursing degree and practical, the LPN program — we ended up with 332 graduates. Estimates for this year, or the last year ending March 31, are 332 total. But we know that in the lag time we're going to end up with a total between those two in the . . . over 400, 450.

Now the question really is, what is the kind of jump or change that needs to take place over the next 6 months to 18 months in

training of nurses to deal with the problem that's going to be there 5 years, 10 years down the road?

That's exactly the question that we've asked Mr. Elliott to do with all of the information he has about Saskatchewan, and it's exactly the kind of information that we know that he has provided to many industries in Saskatchewan as everybody plans to deal with the demographics that we have in North America.

And what we are doing is getting all of that information, making sure we can then work carefully with our institutions that provide that training in Saskatchewan, so that we will be prepared three to five years from now, as well as making sure that many of the young people who are interested in opportunities in the health professions have that opportunity to study.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would like to move on to the role . . . And I preface this by saying that I've met with some MLTs (medical laboratory technologist) who are somewhat concerned about the descriptions of what the nurse practitioners are going to be and that have been gazetted in the proclamation of the roles of the advanced clinical and nurse practitioners.

And the concerns surround this, is that in the wording it says that nurse practitioners are going to be able to perform certain tests. And there's four or five or six categories that are listed where they can perform these tests.

The concern by the MLTs are, will these nurse practitioners be given the appropriate training and in-service to make sure that these tests that they perform are being performed appropriately? And second of all, is there going to be consultation between the registered nurses who are setting up the regulations in regard to the nurse practitioners and the MLTs to make sure that there's an appropriate transfer of function and accreditation of these people to be able to perform these tests?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The whole issue of nurse practitioners and their role is being developed right now in the bylaws around the competencies that nurse practitioners will have.

They will do things in a similar way that the doctors do. They will order the tests but they won't actually do the tests. The other people will actually perform the functions and do the tests.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Minister, the wording in this was to perform, that they're actually functions that they could do. And I think that word perform was what was concerning medical laboratory technicians. And I'm wondering, if the relationship is going to be as you state, then why is the word perform in the proposed regulations?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The issue really is the competencies, what things will the nurse practitioners be able to do, and that will be defined in the consultations as we go along. And practically what it means is the ordering of the tests; it won't mean the actual doing of the tests.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. I think that will be

useful in terms of reassuring the medical laboratory technicians that these tests are going to be conducted in an appropriate way.

Minister, I would like to move onto imaging and diagnostics a bit if I could now. And I certainly want to say initially that the announcement that the department made to include CT scans in Yorkton and Moose Jaw and Swift Current on a permanent basis is welcome news and very much supported.

And I also would encourage the department to consider finalizing that, if you like, and looking at the two northern sort of regions — I'm thinking in particular of North Battleford and the Melfort area — in terms of really using these regional centres to be a part of the imaging and diagnostic opportunities in the province. So I certainly commend the department on being on the right track, and I would hope that in their longer term planning they would look at these other locations.

Minister, I would like to ask you specifically though about MRIs, if you like maybe the next level of imaging. And could you indicate to me how many MRIs there are in operation in the province and where they're located?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, there are three MRIs in Saskatchewan; two located in Saskatoon and one in Regina.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Are all of these MRIs in active service or is, in Saskatoon, one used as a backup or are they both being used? And if you can tell me what the operating schedule or usage is. Are they being used, each of them, eight hours a day or is one being used 12 hours and the other six? Could you outline for the three MRIs what the average weekly or daily usage is?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have the information as of right now, June 2003. At the Royal University Hospital in Saskatoon, the MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) operates there on a five-day-a-week basis at 10 and a half hours per day. And the MRI at City Hospital operates at five-day-a-week basis, except the third week is four days, so it's five, five, four, and that's nine hours per day.

In Regina it operates every day, Monday to Friday, 12 hours a day Monday through Thursday, and then eight and a half hours a day on Friday. That's as of June, right now.

One of the challenges comes . . . is making sure there's enough qualified staff. It's an area where there's demand right across the country, and so as they're able to get more people sometimes the hours are able to increase, but this is the base that we have now.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I guess it goes to the crux of even our previous discussion about medical personnel. Certainly the question of the availability and number of radiology technicians to staff and man the MRIs or supply the person power for the MRIs is an important issue.

Can the minister tell me how many educational training seats there are in Saskatchewan for technicians that would be capable of operating this MRI equipment?

(15:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. How this works on the training of the MRI people is they take the SIAST course, the one-year course that is available here, but then they need an additional nine-month course which is not provided within the province. And people go out of the province and get that nine-month training and then come back and serve.

This present year ending now in, I guess May or April, we've had two return-service bursaries . . . (inaudible) . . . in the fall we will have four return-service bursaries in this particular field. And that relates to the nine-month course extension on top of the initial one-year SIAST course.

Mr. Gantefer: — Minister, in order to get the wait times reduced for MRI imaging, how many further technicians would the system need in order to operate the MRI so that there isn't the delays that currently exist?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, this question is not a simple question, the way it was laid out, in the sense that, as I explained at a previous session, in 1998-99 we did just over 5,000 MRIs in Saskatchewan, all in Saskatoon. The projected numbers as of the end of March 31 this year are 13,650. So that's just over four years of more than, you know, 150 per cent increase, maybe 160 per cent increase in the numbers of MRIs.

The challenges that the length of time it takes to do a single MRI really depends on the particular medical problem. So you have a variable length of time involved in the process.

And the numbers of uses for MRIs seem to be expanding as the capacity expands. I think a fairly good example of that is some of the challenges that they've had in Alberta where they've expanded the numbers of MRIs in the public system and still end up with even greater waiting lists than it had when they went through the big expansion.

So one of the things we've been trying to do is work together with Saskatoon Health Authority and the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority around how to make sure that we're providing as broad a service as we can. And the numbers of people training on return-service bursaries have been developed in conjunction with those two health authorities who in fact are having to hire the people to provide the service.

This is not a simple task of doing this, and obviously we continue to look at and see what the . . . the numbers of people who are waiting. And in actual fact our surgical care waiting list project, as we're getting that underway, the next step will obviously be to look at the diagnostic care and assessment and make sure that there's the appropriate resources — whether it's people or machines or whatever — to deal with the needs of the province.

But it's a tricky area to just give a simple answer.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I understand that, for example SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), Workers' Compensation Board, the RCMP, and the armed forces pay for MRI imaging services.

Is that true and can you tell me how many of these services were provided in the past . . . or the year that you have the latest

information for?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Once again, Mr. Chair, a simple question has a complicated answer but I think a reasonable answer.

As it relates to SGI, in the province, SGI provides a certain sum of money in a global way for the whole health system related to the kinds of tests that they need and the service that they need for accident victims. And so it becomes a general amount. We can probably get the exact figure, but that relates to all of the kinds of care that is provided for accident victims.

As far as WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) is concerned, there have been discussions with them around providing some compensation that would give them access to a certain number of spots per month, for example, on the MRIs. But that has not yet been finalized. So at this point there is nobody that pays anything extra directly around any particular MRI process.

And what we're . . . I mean the idea behind working with WCB is to say, well let's increase the capacity for MRIs, and that allows then the WCB people to get into the system in a timely way based on their needs. But it also gives that capacity availability for all of the citizens of the province. But that's not quite yet finalized, that kind of a process.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I understand that if space isn't available in Saskatchewan — and this may not be your department per se — that WCB or SGI or those people will actually send people to Alberta or other jurisdictions and pay for MRIs. Does the department track any of that outflow to see what potential increase in capacity in Saskatchewan could be captured here?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I don't have the information about the WCB and the SGI numbers, but what we do have information about is the number of out-of-province approvals that our medical services branch gives each year for MRIs out of the province, and sometimes that'll be people actually going out of the province or sometimes it may be people who are somewhere and they've been in an accident or something and need an MRI. But for this present year there were 312 that were approved out of the province and 63 were denied.

So that's kind of the numbers, but clearly we've been looking at these numbers and also trying to work with WCB, for example, to figure out what their demand is so that we can increase the capacity in Saskatchewan so that wherever possible people can get the diagnostic test here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Moving to the funding for the regional health authorities, I have . . . In the Estimates book of course it gives the global amounts under the sub-programs under vote (HE03). But I have a document or a sheet that was circulated I think through the health districts that not only has that information, it has a percentage increase, it's got a ranking, how many people in the population in that regional authority, and the funding per capita.

And I certainly appreciate and understand that the Regina Qu'Appelle and the Saskatoon health districts, because they provide many more services and also that they provide services that are not necessarily solely or as much for their own citizens

in their own regional authority, would receive a greater amount per capita. But for example, on this document, it shows that Regina Qu'Appelle receives \$1,820 per capita and Saskatoon 1,703.

Can the minister explain why there is a significant difference in the amount of dollars per capita each of these two tertiary centres receive?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Chair, I'm not sure which document the member is referring to but it's not a document from the Department of Health. But I know there were some calculations done in one of the health districts and it may be that document that he's talking about.

Practically, one of the challenges in looking at the kinds of per capita funding on a district basis relates to the fact that not all of the funding is in the regional health authority budget. So for example, it doesn't include money that goes to the College of Medicine. It doesn't relate to money that goes to medical remuneration; it doesn't go to alternative payments of funds.

And so there's a whole . . . there's lots of money in the health budget outside of what's the regional health authority, that actually goes and is spent in a particular community for health purposes.

And so our funding in the province is provided on a global basis and a particular area may or may not have programs that are used by people from all over the province. And a good example is the North Battleford area where they have a number of facilities there that provide broader services.

(15:45)

Also another part of this relates to the actual structures that some communities have to work with versus others. Some have newer, modern, more efficient structures as part of their budgets whereas other areas are still having to fund and deal with some physical places that need a lot of work.

And so on a broad basis across the province, that kind of comparison is not that helpful. And we've looked at that but there are many other factors that are also included and that comparison is not helpful at all.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. The Page is delivering a copy of the document that I received, for your use, so you can see it.

Minister, as you notice on that, as well the smaller health districts have by and large similar per capita, if you like, funding except for the Heartland which is sort of more significantly lower than that. Is that a reason of because of the nature of the services that are available in that district? Is that as well what explains the discrepancies in these numbers?

And if you look, the global numbers on the funding come right out of the budget documents so that that's where the money that's been assigned by the department through the budgeting process comes from.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Yes. Very clearly Heartland has no

regional hospitals and so therefore their funding is different. Whereas if you go to Prairie North, they have two regional hospitals — Lloydminster and Battlefords. And so there are those kinds of discrepancies.

Thank you for providing me with a copy. I think this was actually prepared by some of the people in Prince Albert and I had seen this before. But it's not that helpful. It doesn't include a lot of the other kinds of funding that are part of the health system.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, there is currently been negotiated between the Department of Health and the physicians of the province a tentative contract. Can the minister update us on the terms of that contract?

I believe it's been circulated to all of the physician members of the Saskatchewan Medical Association and it was my understanding that until that happened, you know, it would be kept in confidentiality. But now that that is done, is the minister in the position to detail terms of this contract?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — My understanding is that they're just completing the voting process within the SMA (Saskatchewan Medical Association) and hope to have the results by the weekend or early next week so that can be announced publicly. But practically, much of the detail has been set out in an article dated June 10 — which I guess is today — in *The Medical Post* and so I'm . . . I can tell you kind of what, what's happened.

From a government perspective, the overall cost to government is about 22 per cent over the number of years. The fees and the program increases will be basically October 1 this year at 8.3 per cent on the fees, and then 6 per cent on April 1, 2004, and a further 6 per cent on April 1, 2005. So when you add those, those numbers together, that gets you I think to the 20.3 per cent. But then there's also about \$20 million for the various retention and recruitment initiatives and other programs building on a lot of the joint innovative kinds of things that we've been doing with the SMA and with the medical profession in general.

So that's kind of where it's at. They moved some, we moved some, to get some, to get a deal that makes sense for all of us.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. You outlined the various percentage increases over the next three years. In the negotiations of the contract, are the details of the actual fee for service for individual procedures automatically just increased by that same percentage? Or in the negotiations are there adjustments and weighting of individual procedure fees, if you like, to potentially increase the remuneration for medical professionals that are working on more complicated procedures that are well within their scope of practice and perhaps lessening the remuneration for those kinds of services that could be done by other medical professionals, and I'm thinking like nurse practitioners, etc.

So my question is, is there a flat increase on every fee . . . on every individual fee for service or is there negotiations that will be ongoing in terms of the actual fees for individual procedures?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — What happens in the contract is that we provide global amounts relating to the various percentages and then the SMA actually does the allocation between the various procedures and the various specialties within the medical profession.

But Saskatchewan Health is in constant discussion when this is happening because we may have some concerns that a particular area, we have a need for more doctors in that area. And one of the problems is that the fee structure is not comparative across the country so that kind of advice would be provided from some of the officials in Saskatchewan Health.

There may be some other trends across the country that are of concern around some of the fees, and that would be fed into the discussion. But the final allocation is something that is done within the SMA.

And it's a challenge because different groups have different ideas about how money should be divided up. But ultimately over the years they have been able to sort this one out and we have had most of the needs or if not all of the needs that the province has, resolved in the discussions.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. I want to leave the doctors and move to pharmacists now if I could. Is the minister aware of the projected or the estimated shortage of pharmacists in the province and specifically the unfilled pharmacy positions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I'd like to thank the member for that particular question, and I'll try to describe a little bit of what's happening within the profession. And I think I'll be able to answer all of his questions as I do that.

The number of pharmacists in Saskatchewan reported by the Saskatchewan Pharmaceutical Association in 1990 was 909. By 1999 that number had risen to 1,087. In the year 2000 it was 1,108. In the year 2001 it was 1,129.

Right now Saskatchewan has about 105 pharmacists per 100,000 population. That's higher than the Canadian average where there's only 76 pharmacists per 100,000 population.

But one of the challenges in Saskatchewan is that approximately 85 per cent of all of the pharmacists in our province work in the private sector, and so there are demands for pharmacists clearly within institutions and within some of the clinics that are across the province.

We have had some bursaries in this area with return service to the, sort of public sector work, but they haven't worked that well because people can get a job that pays them very well when they finish, and so they just borrow the money on their own and take the course and then not have to worry about the return service.

So what we've done for this year is created five internship programs — three in Regina and two in Saskatoon — whereby students will have a chance to work within the institutional pharmacy kind of program to see what kind of a career that is as opposed to the careers in the . . . for pharmacists in the private sector.

And our hope is that a number of people will see that there are many interesting ways of providing their pharmacy services within the public sector jobs and so that we'll get more of a balance there and not have the pressures that we sometimes have in our hospitals and clinics and other places across the province.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Information that has been shared with me anecdotally from a number of pharmacists is that they would indicate that the shortage of pharmacists globally in Saskatchewan could be approaching as many as 100. And if that information is correct, and that would be both in the private sector — in the local community pharmacists — as well as the pharmacists working in the institutions that you indicate.

Minister, as well, do you track, does the department track what the retention rate is of the graduates coming from the University of Saskatchewan? I understand that the retention rate is not very good. And I wonder if you have the information to indicate what the retention rate is at the University of Saskatchewan from the graduates.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Madam Vice-Chair. One of the interesting things about Saskatchewan is that our University of Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy graduates approximately 80 pharmacists every year. This is the highest number of graduates per population of any province in Canada. In other words it ends up having maybe more pharmacists than our province can actually take in, in the province. So that's been a long tradition of people actually getting training here and maybe working some other places.

According to some of the information that we've received — and I don't have the most recent information; this is from a couple of years ago — but in 2001 only about 40 per cent of the graduates from the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) actually stayed in Saskatchewan, which is one of the challenges.

And most of the people who take pharmacy and then leave our province go west to BC (British Columbia) or Alberta. And so, you know, one of the challenges there obviously was some of the compensation packages and how we related to those places. One of the things I have heard, when I've been talking to pharmacists across the province, is that the compensation package worked out last fall in the HSAS (Health Sciences Association of Saskatchewan) agreement has changed some of that balance but it doesn't totally deal with that issue.

(16:00)

So once again it's an area where we have continual work to do. We train enough people but there still is a long tradition of people going and practising other places. But there's also a tradition of some of those people, after having spent a number of years, having growing up in Saskatchewan, they want to try some other place but then they really like Saskatchewan and they come back. So it's a double-edged sword. Sometimes it's good for people to go and try another place, then come home; other times you lose them because they make connections somewhere else and stay there.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, has the department a concerted effort to retrain and retain and recruit

health care professionals? We've just talked about pharmacists, we've talked about doctors and nurses, technologists. Can the minister outline what comprehensive plan the department has to do everything that is humanly possible to make sure that these, first of all, these people are told how valued they are and how important it is that they stay in Saskatchewan? I know that there is some bursary programs, but certainly the minister, I'm sure, acknowledges that we have to try to improve those percentages from the 40 per cent, for example, you've quoted in pharmacy, to a higher level so that we can help to alleviate the medical professional shortages that we have in this province.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm not sure if the member wanted to ask me that, such an open-ended question because we do have a plan to retain, recruit, and train health care providers. It's part of our action plan. It's one of the sections in that particular document. And I'd like to provide a bit of the flesh on that plan. There's some very clear ideas that were there from December 2001.

But basically it goes like this. The action plan provides the blueprint for how we're going to improve the system while delivering everyday health care services in an accessible way with the best . . . ensuring the best value for every health dollar. And supporting, attracting, and developing skilled personnel is one of the largest challenges in Saskatchewan's health care system.

So we've been doing a number of things and Saskatchewan Health has provided \$3 million in new funding for health provider retention, recruitment initiatives, plus a further half a million dollars for the emergency medical system training initiatives in 2002. We've continued this level of funding into 2003.

And so, what's the strategy? Well the first part of it is to train more health care providers. So we've spent, we've got money directed — \$400,000 — to purchase six new training seats added to in a number of small medical diagnostic disciplines including MRI technology, cytology, sonography, orthotics, and prosthetics technology. We have a new cytotechnology program that's being developed for delivery by SIAST, commencing the fall of 2003.

The new northern nursing program was introduced in the fall of 2002, increasing the nursing enrolment by 40, to 300. That's for the RN nursing. We have 80 new or additional emergency medical responders for upgrading to the EMT (emergency medical technician) basic annually.

SIAST has increased the intake of pharmacy technicians from 16 to 24 in the fall of 2000. SIAST is increasing the dental assisting program from 60 to 65 students in the fall of 2004. SIFC (Saskatchewan Indian Federated College) has established a degree program in environmental health and science for the fall of 2002 which will allow for more of the public health people to be trained.

We have interprovincial training agreements already in existence. We've increased the number of Saskatchewan students being trained as respiratory therapists up to eight, or by eight. We've increased the number of nuclear medics technologists by four. We're increasing the number of

occupational therapy training seats from 10 to 15 at the University of Alberta in the fall of 2003, although we are moving some of the positions that have been at the University of Manitoba.

We're also expanding the bursary programs. In 2002 this was an extra \$800,000. We offered 220 new return-service bursaries. There's also a half a million dollars for a new nursing bursary program for students in registered nursing, registered psychiatric nursing, and licensed practical nursing. We've also had bursaries specifically awarded to RNs who are studying to become primary care nurse practitioners. We also have new first-time nursing bursaries for RNs, RPNs, and LPNs. We've also expanded the number of bursaries to allied health disciplines and offered bursaries to four new disciplines in 2002 — medical laboratory technology, medical radiation technology, nuclear medicine technicians, and pharmacy.

We're continuing to offer the nursing re-entry bursary program. Provincial bursaries have proven to be very successful with a retention rate of graduates at about 80 per cent. We'll also . . . We have the 500 more that came this year. These are the numbers from last year. And the budgeted amount for this year's budget is \$4 million. We also have physician bursaries with funds that are managed within the Saskatchewan Medical Association.

We're continuing to look at supporting continuing education and professional development. This is something that is about retention of professionals and this is work that's going on with the joint committee on health human resource planning and the Health Human Resources Council, which are existing bodies. And this is a specific area mentioned in the action plan and it will take more work as we develop this, but it's clearly what we see as an important part of retaining workers within the system.

We've also allocated money to regional health authorities for priority professional development and there's about half a million dollars been directed to clinical education. And we'll continue to use a coordinated approach around training and orientation of preceptors and improved educational experience which we hope will result in improved retention of medical . . . or people who are studying in the health fields.

And we also have been working at looking at some of the leadership development of managers within the health system. And that's something that we know is something that many of the people who are providing leadership roles within the health system look forward to as part of what they are doing.

We also are developing a representative workforce which will reflect the population of Saskatchewan. This is a continual challenge for all employers in Saskatchewan, and the health system is no different and there are many things that we're doing in that area.

We've been working on improving job satisfaction. Some of the specific examples are the quality workplace projects with the SRNA. The Health Quality Council has been working on evaluating these particular projects and that's working out well.

One of the other things that's been done and was very successful in January of this year was a high-quality . . .

achieving high-quality workplaces educational event, via satellite training, for 600 employees. And we hope to do more things like that.

We're also going to be implementing province-wide health human resource planning. And we have a new . . . Within the department, the health human resource planning branch was established in the fall of 2002. And this works with the Nursing Council, the Health Human Resources Council, joint committee on health human resource planning, the joint Saskatchewan Health-Saskatchewan Learning committee, and the Western Canadian Health Human Resource Planning Forum.

Within the regional health authorities we've been doing many more coordinated things. The accountability documents that we use for regional health authorities deal specifically with some of the human resource issues.

We're also working on research that will support all of these initiatives, and we continue to support research within particular professions dealing with health human resource issues.

We're bringing health training programs together. Academic health sciences in general in the province have been having a fair number of discussions about how to integrate health training, and that's continuing.

We've got a very strong program to support the College of Medicine, as evidenced by the work we've been doing but also the announcement we made not very long ago.

We've increased dramatically the support for health research, and we're doing a number of things around developing and are pleased to have collective agreements in all areas.

So we're working on a plan that fits in with our overall Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care. There are more things that we can do, and we look forward to any ideas and suggestions that you may have and that others may have within the health field, but practically they're the kinds of things that we have to do together.

So I thank you very much for that question and the opportunity to answer it in full.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. You certainly did provide a very full answer but I am pleased to see that the department is taking seriously the issue of trying to maximize the number of people that stay and return to the province because I think it is extremely important if we're going to meet the shortages that exist in the health care sector.

Minister, I'd like to turn now to . . . I understand that there are discussions going on between the health care unions on the pay equity front. And I wonder if the minister could outline what methodologies are being used to determine what reclassifications are going to be appropriate under this program?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, the process used is a joint process between management and union, and they look at all of the various jobs and try to figure out how they fit in an overall grid. And then once that's been established, then the

union negotiates what kinds of adjustments need to be made to make the appropriate fairness be there in the whole system. That's as simple as it is.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, I understand when this type of discussion has happened in other public service unions, it has resulted in special wage adjustments or things of that nature that are required. Has the minister budgeted for special adjustments in remuneration as a result of this pay equity discussions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, the answer is yes, that remuneration has been included in our budgeting plans over a number of years but the exact amounts can't be known until the process is done.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Minister, when this . . . When do you anticipate these discussions to be completed, and will there be a detailed kind of a breakdown of the various categories and the agreed-to wages that will be assigned to those categories when the process is completed? And will you be releasing that information?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — The process will ultimately be public because it'll just be published as the wage scales for the whole system.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Minister, and again I'd like to move to radiology and particularly the services provided in some communities. As the minister understands, it's not only in the technician side that there's shortages. There is also shortages of radiologists in the province. Can the minister outline what the estimated shortage of radiologists are in the province?

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I refer the member to table 23 in the statistical report from Saskatchewan Health, which is the most recent one that we have, which is effective at the end of March 31 of 2002. And in the list of specialists on page 43 in that document it shows pathologists and diagnostic radiologists, the number being 35.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Does the department have an estimate of the required number? If 35 is what we actually have, how many do . . . what would be the ideal situation? What number would be the ideal?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We know that there are certain parts of the province that are recruiting radiologists right now, but on a province-wide basis it kind of depends on the amount of work, the numbers of people who are already there, and how hard they're working, I guess in the sense of how many hours they're willing to work and . . . But at this point we know that there are a couple of parts of the province that are recruiting radiologists. But it hasn't been identified as a huge problem in the province this year.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'd like to bring to your attention . . . I have a copy of a letter from the Associated Radiologists of Saskatoon to the Wadena Health Centre that says, and I'll quote:

Regrettably physician and technologist shortages have forced us to consolidate our out-of-town ultrasound and fluoroscopy service.

In other words, they're not able to service that community into the future because of a shortage of the people that they need in order to do that. And I'm concerned that communities like Melfort as well are needing radiology services to provide the regional services that they need. And I was wondering if in the initiatives that the department had taken and you outlined in detail, are there specific initiatives to increase the number of radiologists in the province? Because I think the minister understands that all kinds of surgical and other procedures are very much dependent on getting timely imaging results. And radiologists of course are a very important part of that.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I'm not able to specifically answer the question as it relates to radiology, but I do have some information around some of the special initiatives that we've been working at around retention and recruitment with the SMA.

So with the SMA, which we developed a fund in the last contract which was called the Specialist Recruitment and Retention Fund, which has an annual budget of 1.5 million. And I'm assuming there'll be some more money for that particular fund in the next contract that's just being worked on now.

But what happened in that . . . using that particular fund, there were 19 new bursaries which include return-service bursaries in 2002 and then there are 25 ongoing bursaries as well as three grants for enhancement training. And we think that there's some radiology people in that particular area.

Another program that was new in 2002 was the specialist emergency coverage program which basically provides compensation for specialists, including radiologists, who are on call for emergencies. And this has added another positive incentive for radiologists to be part of our overall provincial system. And those things are still . . . are ongoing and they continue to develop and be refined, working together with the SMA.

In a longer term vision of what may be happening in, not just in Saskatchewan, but clearly right across North America, are the issues around teleradiology. In other words, the ability to do digital images in one place and have them read in another place in a same-time environment. So that a radiologist who's situated in Nipawin may be able to cover something that's happening in North Battleford if they're on that call that weekend.

And there's some pretty interesting opportunities for us in Saskatchewan, but once again it's making sure we get the right kinds of programs and things. So it's something that we're working together with, with all of the people involved.

But practically, we've got some specific things we're doing and some longer term vision parts, and we're wanting to make sure that services are provided right across the province.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. Those complete the questions that I have for the department today. I'd like to thank

you and the officials for answering the questions very completely. And I would like to invite my colleague from Battleford-Cut Knife to ask questions.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. I guess we do realize and we've talked about the shortage of staffing throughout the entire health services needs in that respect.

I'd just like to go into that area of the LPNs and the RNs that we have in rural Saskatchewan and some of the difficulties that we're having in rural Saskatchewan trying to maintain those services and that staffing as well.

And there is, I guess, a concern out there in the sense of how that staffing is put together and the way — if it's maybe through the contracts that are in place right now or the privileges that are given to the staffing in the sense of having part-time and full-time staffing, and the relationship of part-time and full-time staffing that's out there in those facilities as well — that it's causing a huge concern in the sense of how services can be delivered and having the opportunity of having staff available.

Does the minister have any figures on the sense of even the percentages of full-time and part-time staffing that we have in the system right now and particularly in the rural sector of health care services?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. This whole issue around full-time work, part-time work, and casual work is one of the challenges within the whole health care system. And I don't have specific numbers but I can give you some rough ideas based on information that has been provided by SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations) where approximately 60 per cent of the employees are full-time, about 30 per cent are part-time, and about just under 10 per cent or approximately 10 per cent are in a casual situation. That includes all employees.

Now as it relates to the nursing profession, there was a committee that was struck a few years ago to look at casualization of the nursing force, and that was the name of it. Because one of the concerns was that this was something that had been directed by the employer or by management. It became clear that it was a much more complex issue than that in the sense that many people were choosing not to work full-time based on other responsibilities, other things that they were doing, and preferred to have a part-time job or a casual job because it gave much more control over some of the things that were happening in their lives.

So it's not a simple problem and therefore there's no simple solution. And what's happened is ongoing discussion within the nursing profession around how to provide jobs that fit with people's lifestyles and how . . . and that often changes depending on sort of which decade of their life that they're in. If they've been working for a long time, they may want to start working fewer hours because they're moving towards retirement. If they're early on, then they want to work fewer hours because they are working and taking care of family or doing other things or maybe even doing some more study.

And so it's something we're continuing to look at and it's

something we have to work together with the union management people and with also the training people — whether it's the university, SIAST, or the regional colleges — because all of these things impact on the availability of people to provide work.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, if the minister could address the fact then, is it the ability for the nurses then to choose when there's a job being posted as a full-time position, that that nurse — according to seniority — can then choose if they're going to work on a part-time basis; and then a choice of whatever that part-time may be, if it's a 50, 60, 70, 80 per cent basis that they choose to work on. But through seniority they have the ability to make that choice and that causes then the district to try and fill that position in another form.

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, the answer is yes.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that's really where my question is going in the sense of what we're seeing . . . Like in my community in Wilkie and we've seen it in other facilities which was Greenhead and which is now Heartland district as well, is that when you have those positions filled with part-time people and there's only those people available that have made up that team as such, and you lose one of those part-time people, you don't have another staff member that's available then to come and fill in that position.

And you've created an atmosphere out there with a bunch of part-time employees. In the rural sector you'll probably find that 60 to 70 per cent of those employees are part-time people because they've been given that ability to choose that position to that level.

And we've got right now situations where we've got facilities that are going from 24-hour emergency down to 12-hour because of one individual that's going to be off for an extended period of time.

So when you're looking for people that come in and fill that position from outside that local area, for them to come in on a part-time basis, you just can't get them to come in. But if that was a full-time position that they were coming in to fill, then it's much easier to recruit people and bring them back into that position type of thing.

And I don't know what the minister's thoughts or the department's thoughts are around that, but I think that's an area that needs to be addressed and looked at quite seriously. Because if we're going to try and recruit people into that industry and into those positions when you have part-time positions to fill, they become very difficult to fill in the future, or even today.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I think the answer is that the managers who are working with this in the system are trying to accommodate the people that they have in many ways. And sometimes that accommodation creates the kind of problem that you've identified. And so then the challenge is how to readjust or re-accommodate to get the full-time position

that brings a new person into the community if that's what it requires.

And so sometimes it's . . . the retention side is well, can you make the job fit my lifestyle at this particular time? And it might have part-time capacity to it and it meets the needs of the local people but when they're not there and there aren't enough people and you want to bring somebody from the outside, then you end up having to try to reconstitute how the jobs are put together.

And that's one of the challenges in the system; it's one of the challenges that I know that the managers have been working on. It's further complicated by the various agreements that are in place and that is something that I think is continually addressed in ways, but it hasn't been solved to deal with all of the new problems. You think you might have solved one problem by agreement or by setting up a new system; well then you create some other ones.

But clearly the goal is to accommodate so that you can retain the professionals you have in your community and attract some new ones. And if that's not working, well then you end up having to try some other ways. And one of the challenges from a broad provincial perspective is to make sure that both the employees and the employers have the tools to make those adjustments in maybe a faster way than we can now.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister. Once again I think the department's got to get serious in looking at, you don't want to call them quotas but you need to maybe call them benchmarks as such, that the districts, the health regions now, are maybe limited to the amount of part-time staff, especially the LPNs and the nurses that they carry. Because if you're trying to recruit and retain people in our system and attract people once they're graduating and there's only part-time positions that are available . . . Because on the majority basis the people that are going to get into the retirement mode, all of a sudden they're on part time, so if you're going to try and put somebody into that retirement position, it becomes a part-time position that you're trying to fill.

And it's like the dog chasing its tail; you'll never catch it because that position always . . . or that recruitment opportunity always escapes you because of not having the situation available for them to come and fill. So I think that's an area that you need to take some serious consideration in that sense as well.

And I think what's also going to happen in rural Saskatchewan is utilization becomes a huge factor in providing services in these facilities. And if you start losing the ability to provide that service because you're having to cut the service for a period of time that you don't have staffing, the way the budgets are struck and the budgets are basically allocated is according to utilization. And if you don't have the numbers out there for utilization, then all of a sudden the dollars aren't there in that health region as well to provide the service or the staffing in that respect as well. So I think that's an area that ties together quite handily that . . . to provide the service out there and we can't provide all the services out of the major centres. We still have to use the regional concept of providing services out there

as well in that sense.

I just want to move on to nurse practitioners. There's been a change in the way a nurse practitioner currently is supposed to be being brought in as a . . . There's a new style or a new system that you're looking at right now.

And we have doctors out there that are on fee for service and you have salary doctors. And a nurse practitioner, on the system that was there originally, had to work with a physician that was on salary, that wasn't a fee for service because of this opportunity, a loss of payment for the . . . to the doctors on fee for service.

What is the change that's coming in, that we can now take a look at using a nurse practitioner in the combination of the different type of physicians and the way they're being paid out there, as well as is there a system now coming that you can use this nurse practitioner with a doctor that's a fee for service?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, this is a very good question that the member has asked, but it's part of a much bigger question. And one of the things that's happening right this month is that all of the regional health authorities are providing us with their plans for their regions around primary care initiatives. And I have Dr. Gil White who is here with me today who's in charge of that particular area.

What they are . . . What's happening with nurse practitioners now is that almost 100 per cent of them are being funded through the regional health authorities and not through the medical services branch. And so it hasn't become an issue, the specific question that you've asked.

I think the more important point is that nurse practitioners are very much designed to work in teams, primary care teams. And in that particular setting where you may have a whole number of health professionals including the doctors and the nurse practitioners, the fee-for-service kind of mode as a just one little piece of that is quite a challenge. But all these things are right now in discussion.

I think in many ways here in Saskatchewan we're quite on the forefront of trying to sort out how some of these things might be done. But at this stage we haven't solved that one yet.

Mr. Lorenz: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Deputy Chair, again to the minister. I guess setting up that team concept and using that nurse practitioner in that team kind of environment, does that nurse practitioner then work out of a pool of staffing of nurse practitioners?

Or does it become . . . that person or that individual become part of that team that's more of a localized individual that works out of that particular community or out of those facilities as well? Or is this kind of like a travelling nurse practitioners that is being able to be utilized throughout the different health regions?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I think the general model is that the nurse practitioner would just stay in the community where they're from and do the work there. And some of the models that we've had so far have included them working with the doctor that's in

that community. And so there's enough work for all of them there.

Other models include a doctor in one community and in the neighbour community a nurse practitioner. And then the doctor and the nurse practitioner might even cover a few more communities around that particular area where they're located. But it's quite flexible and it has to be because we have different needs in different parts of the province.

But I would say that the main idea is that the nurse practitioner would work in their own community and be part of that community.

Mr. Lorenz: — Okay thank you, Mr. Minister. Again, Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister. And I guess this relates back to the LPNs and the RNs as well, for the availability of them in one form of another is, you know, to the shortages that are out there. And those shortages may occur in different areas at different times as well.

Is there a pool of those type of people that are available that the different regions can draw on at times when you have that need for a short period of time as well? Do you have a pool of individuals that are available that almost become like free agents that can travel around almost throughout the province to fill in those spots of need at certain times?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I think the answer to the member's question is that we don't specifically have that kind of a pool right now. But there are a number of people who do some of those things, depending on the regions where they are.

One of the advantages but also a challenge for the new, larger regional health authorities is the fact that they do have a bigger pool of employees across a broader area. But when you . . . You can't really force people to go and work many, many miles away from home. But sometimes there are people who are willing to go and cover in another community for three weeks or a month or some time when there's a specific need.

And what we have to be really careful of, and make sure that we, from a Saskatchewan Health perspective respect, is that for the management of the regional health authority, their goal is to recruit and then retain as many people into that area. And so they have a better idea of how to put those jobs together in a way that brings more people to work in their particular area. And if a particular region got a reputation as sort of directing where their employees should be across a broad area, I think that might create a lot of challenges for them to get new staff in there.

So it's a balancing act and people are working very hard. Often they're working with their friends and relatives who do a lot of these jobs and you try to be as accommodating, but also to make sure that you provide the services to the best level that you can. And it's not always possible to get all of those pieces to fit together.

(16:45)

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chairman, to the

minister. As he can appreciate, I'm sure, given the unique geographical conditions of the constituency of Cypress Hills — the vast spaces and the under-populated regions of that constituency — many of the health issues that we have to address are similar to issues I would assume are addressed in the far North. And I'm wondering at this point whether we can see some flexibility in the policy of the department in a specific case.

I have a constituent who lives right on the border of Saskatchewan and Alberta. And because the access road out of their ranch is the meridian road, their distance to Medicine Hat is considerably shorter than it is to Maple Creek, let alone Swift Current. And because they do all of their business in Medicine Hat and because their family is located in Medicine Hat, the situation would be of convenience if they could move their medical requirements to Medicine Hat.

In this particular instance the gentleman involved had two serious strokes and was going to require extended care and probably ongoing fourth level care. And the request by the family was: could they place the husband, in this case, in a Medicine Hat facility and have Saskatchewan Health cover the costs?

Now I know that ordinarily that wouldn't be an acceptable situation. But I'm wondering if there are exceptions to normal policy that might help accommodate this very specific type of situation?

The Deputy Chair: — Why is the member on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair of Committees. I'm sorry to interrupt the proceedings but I would like to recognize in the Speaker's gallery, Louis Gardiner, who is chairman of the Ile-a-la-Crosse School Division and Chair of the Northland College Board. I'd like to welcome him here to the Assembly and have all other members welcome him as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Health Vote 32

(Subvote HE01)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Deputy Chair, I'll assume that the member was talking about long-term care facility. If a patient comes from another province to Saskatchewan and they're accepted into a long-term care facility, we would end up covering that right away.

The specific question that the member's asking relates to what is Alberta policy in a reverse way where somebody moves from

Alberta to . . . I mean moves from Saskatchewan to Alberta and then is accepted in an Alberta facility, and at what point do they deem them to be an Alberta resident and therefore covered under the Alberta health plan?

And I don't have a specific answer to that, although my understanding is that they have a bit of a qualifying period or a waiting period, which is different than what we do here.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Deputy Chair, to the minister, I'm not sure if I elaborated the specifics quite well enough. In this particular case, the wife is going to remain on the family ranch which is still in Saskatchewan. The husband, they would hope to get level 4 care or extended care in Alberta, just for the convenience of it. There was no intent for them to actually relocate to Alberta. Although in our conversations with the individuals, there was some suggestion that that might be the upshot of the whole thing; they may have to physically relocate to Alberta but continue to run their operation in Saskatchewan.

Now I don't think in the long term that would be to Saskatchewan's financial benefit to lose them as residents, but is there any type of reciprocal arrangement you might want to explore with the province of Alberta to see if care for this particular individual as a Saskatchewan resident would be available to him in Medicine Hat?

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. The challenge on the particular area that the member is asking is that it primarily relates to what are the rules in Alberta as it relates to residency? And we don't have the specific information around how that works and that . . . But under our system, even if the couples were still married and one moved into an institution, they would be deemed . . . he would be deemed to have the residency of wherever that institution is, and so therefore they would be covered.

And I'm not sure if there's a different rule in Alberta or what, but practically that wouldn't be a factor that one partner lived in one place and the other partner lived in another one. You just deal with what is the residency of the person who's in the institution?

But perhaps, so I think perhaps the member may want to check with some of the Alberta authorities around that particular issue to help this constituent with you. And maybe if you have some more details, we can . . . I can talk to you some other time.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to thank all the officials who have been with me today and thank the members opposite for their questions. And I'd like to move that we report progress and ask to leave, for leave to sit again.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:56.

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