

The Assembly met at 14:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again today on behalf of people who are concerned about the high cost of education on property tax.

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

The people who have signed this petition are all from Wadena.

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

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

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

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to present a petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the education tax in the province. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

This petition is signed by people from Big River, Debden, Shellbrook, and Lloydminster.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the dangerous and deplorable condition of Highway 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Gravelbourg and Lafleche.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to read a

petition regarding the Qu'Appelle River system and the lowering water levels on a few of the lakes and the harm that has. 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 First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water levels of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm and uncertainty that this dispute has caused.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by many people from the city of Regina.

I so present.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of residents from my home community who are proposing a constructive alternative to the government's plans for a permanent CT (computerized tomography) scan 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 reconsider its plan to allocate the used CT scanner to Swift Current and instead provide a new CT scanner for the Southwest.

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

And they represent entirely the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens from all over Saskatchewan that are very, very concerned about the deplorable condition of Highway 43. 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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I mentioned all over Saskatchewan, this petition is signed by citizens from Mossbank, Saskatoon, Gravelbourg, Moose Jaw, Palmer, and Glentworth.

I so present.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again today in the Assembly on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan which are concerned with the lack of cellphone coverage in the Coleville area, and the heavy oil industry there and the danger that follows that. And the prayer reads as

follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to construct a new cellular telephone tower at Coleville, Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Coleville and Kindersley, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens concerned about services at the Kindersley Hospital.

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, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Kindersley and Eatonia.

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 that are concerned with the low water level in the Qu'Appelle lakes and this government's inability to deal with the issue. 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 within its power to work with First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water levels of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm and uncertainty this dispute has caused.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, signatures to this petition come from the resort community of Katepwa Lake, the town of Fort Qu'Appelle, and Fort San.

I so present.

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

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

those leases.

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

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

I so present.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of 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 the good people of Estevan, Bienfait, and North Portal, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 12, 13, 18, 27, 36, 100, 114, 124, and 140.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly, a number of guests that are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. They are here to mark United Empire Loyalist Day in Saskatchewan and of course to witness His Royal Highness's visit to this city and this province.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, on the ninth of November, 1789 — a little before your or my time — Lord Dorchester, Sir Guy Carleton, Governor General and commander-in-chief of Quebec and all British colonies, stated his desire to place a mark of honour on those who had sacrificed so much for the preservation of the Unity of the Empire by affixing the letters UE (Unity of the Empire) to their names and of their descendants of either sex. They were allowed to pass it on to their descendants as recognition for their loyalty to and service in defending the Crown during the American Revolutionary War. It is that which is recognized on this day.

Mr. Speaker, among our guests today is Mr. Logan Bjarnason who is the president of the Saskatchewan branch of the United Loyalists of Canada. Mr. Bjarnason — I would ask him to please stand — is wearing a replica of his ancestor's uniform from Butler's Rangers.

A number of other members are also in period costume. Among the other Loyalists joining Mr. Bjarnason and celebrating United Empire Loyalist Day are: his wife, Shirley, both from Froude, Saskatchewan; Gerald Adair of Maryfield, the branch's

secretary, and his wife, Pat; Doris Taylor of Regina, treasurer, and her husband, Clarence; Lorna MacKenzie, also of Regina, the branch's genealogist, and her husband, Ken; Susan Darke from Zehner; Ken Fader from Regina; Jennifer Schafer has come from Vauxall, Alberta, Mr. Speaker; Barbara Miller from Prince Albert; Audrey Kaufmann from Lake Alma; Linda Smith from Regina; and Lloyd and Verla Redick who are also from Regina.

I would ask all my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, in the Assembly to welcome these fine folks, very distinguished guests to our Assembly here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Melville in welcoming the guests to the gallery today. I know that United Empire Loyalists are an important movement in Canada. My own family had UEL (United Empire Loyalist) behind their name at one point, coming up from the United States long ago.

And I'm very glad to see that you're keeping our history, our important history, alive. And I ask all members present to again extend a welcome to our friends in the gallery.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as well to join the minister and my colleague in welcoming the representatives of the United Empire Loyalists and especially again to say hello to the Adairs — to Gerry and Pat — and welcome them to this Assembly.

I don't know how many years they've made the trip already but we're pleased to see them coming and joining each and every one to celebrate this special event. And I know it was indeed a special event today with the prince coming to town.

So to each and every one of you, welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Lorjé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with my colleagues in welcoming our esteemed time travellers to this Assembly.

And I would also like to give a special personal welcome to my Member of Parliament, Carol Skelton. Although we don't share a political philosophy, we certainly share a passion for ensuring that this world will be a better place for our children and grandchildren.

So I would ask all members to welcome Carol Skelton to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd also like to join with the member from Southeast in welcoming Carol Skelton here today. Knowing Carol, I imagine she's here enjoying the Farm Progress Show, and I hope she enjoys what goes on here.

So I will also welcome her here too. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to my colleagues in the legislature, two constituents from Swift Current that are seated in your gallery.

I'd like to introduce to members of the House and yourself, Mr. Speaker, Crystal Martens, she's a part-time assistant in our office for the summer, back in Swift Current. And she's here with her father, a businessman in the community of Swift Current, Dan Martens.

So I'd ask all members to welcome them here to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Osika: — Thank you very much again, Mr. Speaker. In the west gallery, I would like to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the Assembly, a father-in-waiting that has his brother here as well, and a grandmother-in-waiting for a pending child delivery.

I'd like to introduce my chief of staff, John Morris, his brother Michael who works with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), and Mrs. Morris who is here from Ottawa for the occasion of a pending arrival.

Please welcome them to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:45)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Regina's 100th Birthday

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, 100 years ago a town located by a small stream in the middle of a huge, open plain became a city. The town had been around for about 20 years and it had about 3,000 inhabitants. There were some who said that it was an awful place for a city; that this motley collection of houses and buildings squatting on the treeless plain could never amount to anything.

But that's not what the people of the town thought, and they set about transforming that little town into not a huge city but certainly a wonderful one. The people did the things that you would expect. They built hospitals and schools and churches and houses and office buildings. They built bridges and roads and put in trolley lines and did all the things you'd have to do to make a city.

But they did more than that. They also started planning parks, planting trees, creating an oasis of green in the middle of that once treeless plain, and in the process created a great place to live. And there's no two ways about it — Regina is a great place to live.

I'm sure all of my colleagues will join me in acknowledging the vision, foresight, and hard work of all those who had a part in making Regina the city that it is today, and in offering congratulations to the city of Regina and all its inhabitants on its 100th birthday. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Paswegin Resident Honoured

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Tuesday, June 3, Ray Engemoen from Paswegin received national recognition when he was given an award from Environment Canada for volunteer service.

For just about 40 years Mr. Engemoen took daily readings of temperature and precipitation as well as notes on the general characteristics of the weather. His monthly reports to Environment Canada combined with other data helped create a record of the climate of Canada, a service that's been ongoing since 1840. Mr. Engemoen started recording the weather twice a day in September of 1963. He says he's seen some very different weather.

In a recent article in *The Wadena News* he stated that one of the memorable days was one several years ago when the temperature did not change between the morning and evening readings. With the sensitive equipment that he has at his fingertips, he says it is very rare that the temperature would not vary even half a degree.

His recording information has not only been used by Environment Canada but by Saskatchewan Crop Insurance, RMs (rural municipality), and the local paper. I've also contacted him myself for rainfall information in the area.

Mr. Speaker, without volunteers this valuable information would not be available. I would ask this Assembly to join with me in thanking Mr. Engemoen for his commitment to gathering this information.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

United Empire Loyalists

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how's this for a nice bit of synchronicity. Today we welcome to our legislature, our city, and our province, the Earl of Wessex.

Today we officially celebrate the Queen City's 100th birthday. And, Mr. Speaker, today I am happy once again to join my colleague from Melville in welcoming to the Assembly the members of the United Empire Loyalists, for today, June 19, is also their day. This is the day on which we recognize the roughly 4 million Canadians — about one in six — who can trace their ancestry back to the original Loyalists, those brave individuals who remained loyal to the Crown and came to Canada during the American Revolutionary War.

As I said last year, Mr. Speaker, I am one of those, though my connection to my ancestors is one more year removed. Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly we are constantly reminded of our ancestral ties to the British parliamentary tradition through our

rules and procedures, through our laws, and through the way our officials, at least, are costumed.

The Empire Loyalists help preserve and strengthen our brand of democracy, but it is important to point out that although our governing system is British in origin, the original United Empire Loyalists were multicultural — they included liberated slaves, Mohawk First Nations, German, Dutch, Scotch, and Irish colonists. Our multicultural society as we know it today starts there.

I am proud of my Canadian roots, proud that they include the UEL, and I know all members join me in applauding the strength and diversity represented by the United Empire Loyalists. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Western Canada Farm Progress Show

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we extend a very friendly welcome to Prince Edward over the next days, we should keep in mind many other visitors to Regina this week. The annual Western Canadian Farm Progress Show is underway in Regina and promises to attract many visitors once again to our province's capital.

The Western Canada Farm Progress Show began in 1978 after years of planning by members of the Regina Chamber of Commerce and the Regina Exhibition Association. That first Farm Progress Show in 1978 showcased the newest innovations in farm equipment, and over the years the show grew much larger as farmers in our province learned about the newest farm equipment and practices available through . . . to them, while manufacturers used the show to garner valuable feedback from their customers.

Today the Farm Progress Show is considered one of the premier dryland farm equipment shows in all of North America. This year's show has over 700 exhibitors spread out over 102 acres. Mr. Speaker, several of my colleagues and I were at the show yesterday, when I was honoured to be asked to speak at the luncheon hosted by the Regina Chamber of Commerce, and it is as impressive a show this year as any.

Congratulations to all the organizers and exhibitors at the 2003 Western Canada Farm Progress Show.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

St. Ann's Senior Citizen Village's 50th Anniversary

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Sunday in my constituency of Saskatoon Eastview, I took part in the 50th anniversary celebrations of St. Ann's Senior Citizens Village. I was pleased to join St. Ann's executive director, Mr. Rae Sveinbjornson; the Roman Catholic Bishop of Saskatoon, the Most Reverend Albert Legatt; the Ukrainian Catholic Bishop of Saskatoon, the Most Reverend Michael Wiwchar; and several other officials connected to this Saskatoon institution.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this was both a 50th anniversary

celebration, and at the same time, an official grand opening. Fifty years ago, Bishop Francis J. Klein founded the first St. Ann's home. Over the years, the home has moved several times, expanding and changing each time to meet the needs of seniors.

A year ago, the Minister of Health approved \$1.16 million in provincial funding for the redevelopment of the current St. Ann's Senior Citizen Village on Louise Street. So we celebrated 50 years of service, and christened expanded facilities which will take St. Ann's well into its second half century.

Mr. Speaker, we are pleased to support this redevelopment. It is one more example of how we are working with all our health care providers to strengthen and sustain our health system into the future for all of our citizens.

I am pleased to have such a fine facility in my constituency and I extend my best wishes to St. Ann's, its staff, and its residents. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

McMillan Motor Products 25th Anniversary

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as we sit in this Assembly today, we may, as MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), on many occasions find ourselves just totally wrapped up with the process of our duties as legislative members and our duties on the floor of the Assembly.

However, one of the special duties is time away from the Assembly and just enjoying the celebrations with our constituents. And this past week, past Thursday, I had the honour of joining together with the community of Kipling and the surrounding area as the McMillan Motor Products celebrated their 25th anniversary of their car dealership.

And, Mr. Speaker, Glen K. McMillan, some 25 years ago, bought the dealership from the Ransoms who had operated the dealership for years. Bob Ransom then moved to Watrous and the McMillans came in and began running the dealership. They were joined by their daughter Monica and her husband Mark, and son Derek.

And, Mr. Speaker, just to get together with folks and enjoy a barbecue and enjoy this celebration is something that makes the job of being an MLA worthwhile. I'm sure each and every MLA finds that that experience to be something worthy of note, and it's also an opportunity as well to hear from your constituents and find out some of the concerns they had.

One of the concerns on most people's minds that day, Mr. Speaker, certainly was the BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) problem, as a lot of the men and women at that barbecue are in the livestock business.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend my congratulations to the McMillan family and all their employees for 25 years of service and dedication to their community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Sessional Reruns

Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, you know that old song — Could it be? Yes, it could. Something's coming, something's good. What's coming here, Mr. Speaker, is summer session reruns — a daily replay of the highlights, rather the lowlights, of question periods past. Something good — hardly; something boring — daily.

Faithful viewers of the legislative channel should not adjust their sets. They need not have their hearing checked. They should not assume that they have been thrown into the movie, *Groundhog Day*.

No, Mr. Speaker, there's nothing wrong with the public. The fault lies with the fading stars across the way who are so in love with their two questions, that they ask them over and over and over. And timely? My word, Mr. Speaker, these questions are snatched right out of tomorrow's headlines. Hey, Minister, what's this bingo stuff — five years ago? Look, bud, when are you going to fix my road? Oh, you did. Well when are you going to fix my road?

And why are we in the public suffering these abysmal reruns at thousands of taxpayer dollars a day? Could it have anything to do with the Carrot River by-election? Do they want to keep us here so we can't campaign while their skeleton crew holds the fort down here? No, that would be manipulating the people's business for crass political reasons, wouldn't it? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Saskatchewan Government Insurance

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we would hope that the member for Regina Victoria would be as concerned about his government's multi-million dollars in losses in the Crown corporations sector as he is about doing the business of the House.

My question is for the minister of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the president of SGI warned the Crown corporation is losing, is going to lose money in 2003. He also warned that car insurance rates would be going up as a result of that, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister assure the legislature today that the NDP's (New Democratic Party) massive \$17 million loss on their Ontario insurance company gamble at Coachman Insurance, will he assure the House that that gamble of taxpayers' dollars will not drive up auto rates in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well SGI has not applied for any auto insurance premium increase at all, Mr. Speaker. Let me point out to the public of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, the great defenders of SGI, you heard the motion the other day. It lasted exactly one day, Mr. Speaker, one day. Today they're back attacking SGI, Mr. Speaker; Mr. Speaker, a

Crown corporation that has provided for the people of Saskatchewan amongst the lowest auto rates in all of Canada. I listened to their speeches the day before yesterday, Mr. Speaker; I listened to their speeches. Even they acknowledge that. But here they are back again today attacking SGI, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, the minister still doesn't get it. This is not an attack on the Auto Fund but this . . . Mark our words, Mr. Speaker, this is surely an attack on the NDP's (New Democratic Party) abysmal record of wasting taxpayers' dollars in places like Ontario, Mr. Speaker. That's what it's about. That's what it was about two days ago.

Mr. Speaker, in the last annual report of SGI for the year 2002 we see here that . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order. Order, please. I would ask all members to remind themselves that it's a little difficult to hear when everybody is speaking at once. And we ought to be listening to a questioner and a responder.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to SGI's annual . . .

The Speaker: — Just a minute, just a minute. Order. Order. Perhaps longer, for longer than just a second.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. According to SGI's annual report, in 2002 expense costs at the Auto Fund, excluding claim costs, went up a whopping \$5.7 million, Mr. Speaker. That's in a year where the Auto Fund only posted a razor-thin \$850,000 surplus. And now the NDP is talking about jacking up the auto insurance rates for motorists across the province.

The question to the minister is this: if he doesn't want to answer the \$17 million lost in Ontario, will he tell motorists in Saskatchewan what is he doing to keep costs down at the company so those don't have to be passed on to motorists in the province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well either that member from the Saskatchewan Party does not understand the process, Mr. Speaker, or he is deliberately trying to mislead the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, that member knows . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask the Minister of Crown Investments Corporation to withdraw the statement regarding deliberately misleading.

(15:00)

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw that.

Mr. Speaker, what I want to say, Mr. Speaker, is there is no

connection, Mr. Speaker, no connection between the investment in Coachman, as that member suggests, and the Auto Fund here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — absolutely none whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, none whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, SGI in the Auto Fund offers, as I have indicated many, many times, Mr. Speaker, and as those very members in the Saskatchewan Party grudgingly acknowledged the other day, offers among the lowest rates in all of Canada, Mr. Speaker. Why must they stand up here today and attack SGI after they acknowledge that SGI does provide the lowest rates, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, that minister should read his own annual report, because his own annual report shows that, what has the Auto Fund invested in? SCISL (SGI CANADA Insurance Services Ltd.), Mr. Speaker. What's SCISL all about? Investing taxpayers' dollars in Ontario. And furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the minister will not answer the question in this Assembly as to why the expenses at the Auto Fund are . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order. Order, please. Order. Once again, members, I would also remind all members to refrain from making personal comments across the floor.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And furthermore, the minister hasn't answered the question. Expenses at this, at the fund are up \$5.7 million last year, in a year where they only posted an \$855,000 surplus. What is he doing to keep costs down, Mr. Speaker, so that they're not passed on to motorists?

On Tuesday in this House the Saskatchewan Party introduced a motion to maintain and strengthen public auto insurance in the province of Saskatchewan. Not only would the NDP not vote for our motion, but then they wouldn't even let a vote on their own amendment go through — an amendment we would have supported.

Mr. Speaker, in light of what SGI is saying yesterday in terms of the rates going up in the fall, in light of the expenses going up at the Auto Fund and the fact they won't support our motion to support public auto insurance, will the minister tell the House, what is their hidden agenda? What are they hiding about their plans for the Auto Fund?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well that, that question is absolutely incredulous, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely, it's absolutely incredible. Mr. Speaker, the last time that SGI applied for a rate increase it was a 2 per cent increase. It was almost three and a half years ago, Mr. Speaker — three and a half years ago.

Do you know what's gone on across the country? We have seen rate increases in excess of 50 per cent, Mr. Speaker — in excess of 50 per cent. SGI's last rate increase, three and a half years ago, 2 per cent. Mr. Speaker, we should be proud instead of attacking SGI and the Auto Fund.

For one day, Mr. Speaker, they saw the light; they obviously are back in the dark again today, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mathematics and Writing Skills of Saskatchewan Students

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Learning. K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education system holds in its hands the future of our province's most valuable resource, and that's our children. And that's why yesterday we were very disappointed and very concerned when the *Indicators* report was released.

The report showed that Saskatchewan students are very generally falling below provincial expectations in mathematical testing and in some cases scored significantly lower than other Canadian students.

As the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association correctly points out, our poor showing is a concern but so also is the fact that the students haven't shown any improvement over the last five years.

Mr. Speaker, what does the Minister of Learning plan to do to help Saskatchewan students improve their level of mathematical skills?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We all know how important education is to our future. That's why this government has invested \$1.2 billion in education, 510 million into the K to 12 system.

Studies like the report that was released just this week inform our decisions about how we change our curriculum to meet the needs of our students. That will be what we will be doing with the report, working with our department and our partners to see what changes we need to make to address the deficiencies or inefficiencies that we may have had pointed out to us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, that department's had five years to figure out what they're going to do to improve it, and there really hasn't been any significant improvement. There has to be a greater effort to help our schools focus on math.

The results of the *Indicators* report show that there really hasn't been any improvement and now we have to determine why we haven't had this improvement. Do we need new programming? Do we need more resources? What are we going to do to make sure that students have the skills that they need to get into the future? And more importantly, how is this government going to evaluate the process?

These *Indicators* reports were out every year for 10 years, and now it's on a once-a-year or twice-a-year basis, and we have to be able to evaluate what's our students' improvement in math skills. What's this department going to do to evaluate the students' improvement?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our curriculum in Saskatchewan is called the Evergreen Curriculum, and it's internationally renowned with its responsiveness to the needs of students.

This is something that we will be looking at within the department and with our partners in the learning sector to see what we need to do to change, to meet the needs of the students, and to address some of the concerns reported to us.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it's just not good enough to continue looking at it. We have to have a minister and a department and a government that cares about the students . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, the *Indicators* report follows closely on the heels of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada report that conducted a national writing test. Once again a large percentage of Saskatchewan students scored below Canadian average and below the expected level of writing and language ability.

Mr. Speaker, we now have two recent studies reporting that Saskatchewan students are trailing the national average and are underperforming in two very important skills — math and writing.

We know our teachers are doing an excellent job with the curriculum and with the resources they're given to work with and our students are being evaluated in the same way as other students across the country.

Mr. Speaker, this should be a concern for the minister and it should be a concern for that government. Mr. Speaker, what steps does the minister plan to take to ensure that the education system helps our students meet and exceed accepted provincial and national performance, not only in math but also in writing skills?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in the last two answers, the department will work with its . . .

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

Hon. Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said in my other two answers, the Department of Learning will work with its partners in the learning sector to address the reported results. We do this on a yearly basis. We look at all the things that we see from these indicator reports and then adjust our curriculum accordingly.

On another note, Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic that this member stands in her place and says that they have a commitment to education. All we have seen from them is zero funding. And when it was asked to be clarified by the post-secondary critic in estimates, they said they would not just freeze it, they would

keep it at the rate of inflation.

Inflation would not have done anything for the school system. We would have seen cutbacks, layoffs. Nothing would have been accomplished with that sort of agenda and that's all the Sask Party has to offer people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Wildlife Habitat Land

Mr. Allchurch: — Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for that rousing applause.

Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Environment minister. In Saskatchewan there are about 3.4 million acres of land protected as critical habitat wildlife land under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act. Mr. Speaker, will the minister indicate if it is possible for any individual or any corporation to purchase or in any other way acquire lands currently owned by the provincial government and protected under the habitat, or The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we believe that the most important value any government could give the entire citizens of this great province is a fair, balanced approach, Mr. Speaker. And what that member is upset over, Mr. Speaker, is several days ago in estimates I told that member we're going to do all we can to help the Indian bands of this great province achieve TLE settlement, treaty land entitlement.

And they are going, Mr. Speaker, from 1 per cent to 2 per cent of the total land mass of Saskatchewan. And that lemon-sucking opposition doesn't like it because . . .

The Speaker: — Order. There are certain phrases that are not quite fitting for this Assembly, and I would ask the member to withdraw that statement before he proceeds.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'll withdraw that statement, but what the problem with that opposition, Mr. Speaker, is that every time we try and correct a wrong and to make sure we do justice to all people — and all people, on this side of the Assembly, include the First Nations people — they don't like it.

And, Mr. Speaker, one of the things we have done is to take wildlife habitat protection lands to help accommodate, to help accommodate TLE claims. And we can do that, Mr. Speaker, because most of the other land is encumbered by many people that settled this great province. And that member, who we haven't seen for a number of weeks here, doesn't like it, along with that party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would remind the member for Athabasca he's not to refer to the presence or absence of members in the Assembly.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Speaker, in regarding critical habitat

wildlife land, it was a former member on that side, the Hon. Lorne Scott, that implemented this Act. And that Act stated that critical habitat wildlife land was to stay in its natural state, and therefore the preservation of all people and the wildlife and habitat. It was their member that did it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Speaker, under the wildlife protection Act, protected land cannot be used for any purpose other than providing animal habitat — no hunting, no fishing, no logging, and no mining. But this NDP government has removed approximately 97,000 acres of protected land and used it to settle treaty land entitlement claims with First Nations.

Mr. Speaker, why is the NDP taking land currently designated as critical habitat wildlife land and using it to satisfy TLE claims?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I'll point out, Mr. Speaker, to that invisible member, that we have for many times across this Assembly have told time and time again all members across, that on this side of the House we believe in TLE settlement. And the Indian bands of this province have settled for TLE to go from 1 per cent of the entire land mass of this province to 2 per cent, Mr. Speaker.

And in Aboriginal people, the First Nations people do care about the environment, about the fish, about the wildlife, about the ecosystems. They are great stewards of our environment, Mr. Speaker.

So we come along and say, this historical injustice, we're trying to settle it. Hey, we got some opportunity here to not . . . go after unencumbered land to settle TLE claims. And all of a sudden they're all up in arms over there.

Mr. Speaker, if they support TLE land claims, if they support to go from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, then they should get up and have the fortitude to say, yes, we do, and we have no problem. But you know what, Mr. Speaker? They don't.

So they get up and they complain about TLE settlement because we're putting them on wildlife habitat lands to make sure that we meet the obligations that we should be meeting. And they don't like it, Mr. Speaker. Come clean.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Speaker, the answer to that question is, we do. Mr. Speaker, will the minister confirm that a section of the land in the RM of Meeting Lake, that has been deemed by provincial government as critical habitat wildlife land and protected under The Wildlife Habitat Protection Act has in fact been transferred to the Mosquito First Nation to satisfy a TLE claim?

(15:15)

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — In our agreement with the First Nations, on this side of the House we're going to honour those

agreements. And what we often tell people is that there are many agreements we've signed with the First Nations, whether it's treaty agreements or TLE agreements, and on this side of the House we'll honour and respect our First Nations agreements.

And on that side of the House, they don't like it, Mr. Speaker. You know why? Because they don't support those agreements. You know why, Mr. Speaker? There's no common denominator when it comes to the good of all of Saskatchewan.

And I say to that member of the opposition and the entire opposition, that if you guys support TLE, get up and don't just say it in the Assembly; practise it, Mr. Speaker. Practise it by going out and explaining to people the value of the TLE agreements, the gaming agreement, the value of the treaties.

On this side of the House we respect the Aboriginal people, the role that they play in conserving the environment, and the role that they have to play when it comes to a land base and the economic value of that land base. And on this side again, Mr. Speaker, we support them 100 per cent and we practise what we preach, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, does the Mosquito First Nation intend to use the critical habitat wildlife land it has acquired from the province for the purpose of selling outfitting services?

And if so, has the Mosquito First Nation been granted an outfitting licence from either the provincial government or the federal government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, once again I'll explain to that member. On this side of the House we're going to do our best efforts to settle TLE land claims. We're going to do our very best efforts, Mr. Speaker. We're going to balance all the interests, Mr. Speaker, of Saskatchewan people.

And on this side of the House we're going to stand up day after day, we're going to defend the agreements that we made with the First Nations people, and we're going to defend them with vigour.

And what we're not about to do, Mr. Speaker, is spend a whole bunch of time explaining to that opposition, who doesn't support it, that this is how we're going to do things. Because they don't accept it, they don't support it, and they don't defend it, Mr. Speaker.

So what that means to me, Mr. Speaker, is they never once in their entire speeches to the many First Nations ever come clean to say, yes we do or no we don't. They say, oh yes we do. But, Mr. Speaker, that's why their Leader of the Opposition's at 27 per cent. On this side we're at 45 per cent for leadership because we show examples how you make a deal and you stick by it, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Government Harassment Policy

Mr. Hillson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in her report of a year ago — the report that I think Saskatchewan taxpayers paid \$20,000 for — Marilyn MacKenzie said of the Saskatchewan government, and I quote:

There exists a prevailing atmosphere of crisis management which permeates all senior levels . . .

Now at the time of her report, the government committed to developing immediately an harassment policy for ministers' offices. More than a year has passed. Has the government approved an harassment policy for ministers' offices or does the crisis atmosphere spoken of by Ms. MacKenzie still prevail?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I'll speak on behalf of government that a great deal of work has occurred over the past 12 months in building a harassment policy, one that will be applicable to the whole of government. And I think we've all learned from some more recent experience of harassment in government.

The policy as it will affect ministers of the Crown and ministerial offices has been formulated. We are now in a process of discussion and consultation with staff within those offices and we expect implementation once that consultation is concluded.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Call for Election

Mr. Hillson: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier told us a few weeks ago that he couldn't call an election because he had so much pressing business. And what might that pressing business be?

The government's ethanol strategy is in shambles. The legislative agenda this session can only be described as thin. The governor of the Bank of Canada says that his projected 2.5 per cent growth rate for this year is now far too optimistic but our Minister of Finance sticks to the figure of 6.8 per cent. Ministers routinely tell this House what they are not going to do, namely privatize, but they do not tell us what they are going to do. Now we find that even drafting an harassment policy for ministers within a year is apparently too onerous a task for this government.

So what business is the government doing that prevents them from seeking the confidence of the voters? Or is it a lack of their confidence in the voters that prevents them from calling an election?

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the first question that comes to my mind in response to the member from North Battleford is, does the Liberal caucus have a harassment policy?

The second question is this, Mr. Speaker. Has the Liberal member of this legislature participated in any meaningful way to assist the people of Saskatchewan as we've moved through the BSE crisis?

He says we have work yet to do. He's right we have work left to do. We have to deal with a Liberal government in Ottawa on a daily basis, on a daily basis to bring some justice to Canadians. I ask the Liberal member from North Battleford, has he or his leader done anything of any substantive merit in the last several days to assist Saskatchewan people in a time of great need in this province? Has he done a significant thing in the last few days?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MOTIONS

Leave of Absence

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, leave to move a motion regarding absence of members for a Parliamentary Association trip.

Leave granted.

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move, seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That by leave of the Assembly, the absence be granted to the members for Saskatoon Nutana, Melfort-Tisdale, Regina Wascana Plains, and Indian Head-Milestone for Monday, June 23 to Tuesday, July 15 inclusive to attend the Partnership of Parliaments in Germany and the State Legislative Leaders Foundation in Poland on behalf of this Assembly.

I so move.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 43

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Belanger that **Bill No. 43 — The Forest Resources Management Amendment Act, 2003** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is again a pleasure to get up to talk about Bill No. 43, a Bill to amend The Forest Resources Management Act.

Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to make a few comments on this Bill yesterday and it is my pleasure to be able to get up today and maybe get into a little more meat on this Bill, Bill No. 43.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wiberg: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we had an opportunity to be able to take a quick look at Bill No. 43, and certainly Bill No. 43 is designed, from an NDP government point of view, Mr. Speaker, to be able to address some concerns raised by the American United States forest industry.

And certainly our number one consumer, the United States of America has some concerns about how we do business in Canada, in the country of Canada and certainly how we . . . and specifically how we do business in the province of Saskatchewan because as we all know, Mr. Speaker, after many years of this NDP government, we're come to kind of expect that business in Saskatchewan must be done with and through the NDP government or not at all.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important for this House to understand that there are some conditions that the United States government has put upon jurisdictions outside their country that will help what they believe . . . the standard that they believe they have set for themselves, Mr. Speaker, in order to have a fair playing field from their perspective. And after all, they are the customer. They are the customer, Mr. Speaker, and the customer you know, from a business point of view, is always right.

They believe that there are five points that need to be met, five conditions that need to be met in order for jurisdictions, Saskatchewan being one of them . . . And it doesn't matter whether it's our neighbours to the west of us or neighbours to the east and even as far east as the Maritime provinces, these conditions must be met in order to be able to overcome the trade injury tariff that has been applied against our softwood lumber industry. And this extremely, extremely regressive tariff, Mr. Speaker, has put a great deal of pressure on the softwood lumber industry in Saskatchewan.

But the softwood lumber, Mr. Speaker, is the responsibility of the provincial government and provincial governments need to take the opportunity to be able to address the issue themselves rather than come with Bills such as Bill No. 43, Mr. Speaker, which would lead more to, lead more to establishing a Saskatchewan position to help support the federal government in softwood trade dispute negotiations.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I think the reality is is that we need to start in Saskatchewan depending less upon the federal government as this government is wont to do and to try to work out a reasonable agreement with ourselves. Put a process in place to be able to allow our forest industry the opportunity to do business anywhere in the world without the . . . with an opportunity, with an eye to the future, with a vision, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan is open for business.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we all know in this province in the forestry sector is that one of the things that this NDP government has hoisted onto the forestry sector is that if you get an allotment of wood, a significant acreage, or hectareage I guess, Mr. Speaker, as we now . . . is the term we should be using, is that — and of course we have some very large allotments in this province — is that there's an expectation from these large corporations to do business in this province, is that there's a minimum cut standard that this government, the NDP government foists upon them in order that jobs will be

created.

And you can kind of understand where the government was going on this when it was originally created. That X amount of wood must be cut out of your allotment every year, X amount of jobs will then therefore be created, stumpage fees will be paid, and in the meantime personal income taxes are going to be paid into provincial government coffers. And on the surface it kind of looked like a good idea.

The reality was . . . is that this kind of a policy, Mr. Speaker, did not allow corporations, forest companies, forestry companies, the open-ended opportunity to be able to adjust production, as this Bill talks about, to adjust the production in order to adapt to market conditions.

And a market condition has been foisted on us, Mr. Speaker, in Canada and certainly in North America. We're actually . . . we're overproducing softwood lumber to the point where we've driven the price of lumber down in North America because of overproduction. And overproduction is being caused in a multitude of jurisdictions because of a minimum cut requirement that has been foisted on them.

And the reality is, is that because they have this minimum cut, the Americans, our largest consumers, see this, Mr. Speaker, as an unfair trading practice.

They consider it dumping of softwood lumber by the Saskatchewan forest companies into the United States because they're forced, these companies are forced to cut this lumber, they're forced to saw it into dimensional lumber, Mr. Speaker, and then, then what does the company do with it? The forestry companies then are forced to either simply put it into storage, and of course they'd require massive amounts of storage as that . . . there's huge storage facilities that would be required.

But, Mr. Speaker, what really happens is that then these forestry companies try to unload this product into world markets. And it creates quite a problem for them because you know, Mr. Speaker, as an example, some of our forestry companies in Saskatchewan have long-term working relationships with wholesalers and retailers, and in the United States of America, and they want to be able to retain that relationship.

(15:30)

And so they continue to produce a product that is not as wanted as much as they'd like to see it wanted, but because of the trade injury duty that has been put upon our province in somewhere in that 27/29 per cent range, that we're forced to sell lumber at sometimes below the cost of production in order just to get it off our woodlots.

And so what the United States of America then is asking is — one of their conditions, Mr. Speaker — is to readjust our minimum cut requirements in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so forestry companies and businesses, businesses — and whether it's in forestry or mining or oil and gas or agriculture — if you're overproducing you want to be able to cut production a little bit, Mr. Speaker, and adjust your harvesting methods to reflect the demands of the industry. But when you

have a minimum cut requirement as we do in Saskatchewan it makes it very hard to do.

So this is one of the areas that our largest consumer, our largest customer, the United States of America have said to us — whether it's Saskatchewan or British Columbia or Alberta or Manitoba or Ontario, anywhere where there's a minimum cut requirement — they see this as an unfair trade advantage because it's forcing companies in Canada to cut sawlogs, to turn that into lumber, and then are forced to sell it in order to just to defray the cost of putting up this wood product.

Another concern that has also been raised by our largest consumer, the United States of America, the largest user of our export product, is that there are restrictions in certain jurisdictions in Canada on saw mill closures. Now in Canada we have to understand that when you do business, that sometimes that closures are going to have to take place and most of these closures take place around market conditions, Mr. Speaker.

And so when a forestry company is forced to because of, one, minimum cut requirements or whatever conditions they may have to deal with when they're working with a provincial government, is that they're being forced to keep a mill open that otherwise that they may like to have sit idle for six months or nine months or whatever, and have the unfortunate — and of course it's unfortunate, Mr. Speaker, no one is doubting that — that forestry workers in these mills, forestry workers that are working first-hand in our forests may have to take some short-term layoffs and become clients of Employment Insurance in Canada. And that's unfortunate.

But unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that is a reality in the business sector, is that when there are downturns in large sectors such as this, whether it's forestry or mining or oil and gas, that there will be some layoffs. And when you force . . . When you have policies in place that force mills to remain open that are sawing lumber merely to fill minimum cut requirements, then, Mr. Speaker, our largest consumer, the United States of America, our largest trading partner, feel this creates also an unfair trade advantage.

And so what it does then is that Canadian companies are felt as though they're forced, they're forced to adapt business practices that are not healthy for the long-term viability of some of our companies. And maybe, maybe the much larger ones are going to be able to weather this storm but you know we have some medium-sized producers in this province and some smaller producers, Mr. Speaker. They're not going to be able to weather this kind of a storm when they're forced to do business in this manner in this province and they're looking for just a little bit of leeway in this area.

And certainly when our largest user of our finished products, our largest consumer, the United States of America is also asking for this consideration, we need to be responsive to that consumer.

One of the areas that lo and behold caught us by surprise is that we actually have a minimum, a minimum processing requirement. I know of situations in this province where some of our largest foresters have harvested areas of this province and

really had no need for that, for that . . . those sawlogs. And so what they did was that they wanted to be able to have those sawlogs, figured they could sell them to someone else who may have a market that they could have used them for, and stuff like that or situations similar to that.

And imagine our surprise on this side to find out that they actually had to get permission from the, from the provincial government in order to do that. Now we see a clause in here that it is going to allow that to happen on a smoother, a smoother basis.

But the reality is these companies have already paid the appropriate dues, have made good marketing and planning in regards around softwood lumber, have made good business decisions on the basis of consumer usage; but they're forced to cut timber because of a minimum cut requirement and they're forced to saw this timber because they have, they have brought it in from our provincial forest.

And so I think we need to be able to have the type of policies in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, that will allow our provincial forest operators the flexibility — the flexibility, Mr. Speaker — in order that we may be able to adapt during downturns in the softwood lumber industry and yet be able to adapt again when there's significant upturns in the softwood lumber industry.

And we all know, Mr. Speaker, that when it comes to wood products — and it goes right from whether it's a softwood lumber to the OSB (oriented strand board) to plywood, or whether we produce it right into high-quality paper — there are downturns in the markets and there are upturns in the markets. Softwood lumber is certainly suffering a downturn right now but we also know, Mr. Speaker, that there will be, there will be an upturn in the market and we need to be able to position ourselves to be able to handle that.

And so one of the issues . . . another issue that our largest consumer south of us in the United States of America is concerned about is that we have long-term, non-transferable tenures they feel create barriers to the market for our provincial timber.

And so, Mr. Speaker, even the forest industry understands that they're going to have to start looking at how they do business different with provincial jurisdictions.

And we know that to the west of us, the province of British Columbia is looking at putting some of these long-term . . . taking some lands tenures out of long-term and that are non-transferable. And the forest industry is agreeing to this, that some of this lumber needs to be . . . these timbers needs to be brought into a more modern-day type of thinking when it comes to breaking down the market barriers.

And what they want to do is they want to set up a system, Mr. Speaker, where these large forestry operations or larger forestry operations — and maybe they're not all large, I know there's some smaller ones there also too in British Columbia — but actually give up some of their long-term tenures and have that put up for bid, Mr. Speaker.

That bid system, Mr. Speaker, will actually set for the industry

in British Columbia a base value of what that standing timber is worth. And their largest consumer, the United States, one of their largest consumers — and they have two large consumers: one is the United States of America, the other is Asia — but the one long . . . the one large consumer, the United States of America sees this as levelling the playing field between their forestry companies in the United States and the forestry companies in British Columbia.

Now that's going to create a problem here in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Because we know that some of our forest users in this province are doing business in the United States of America and if those consumers, that consumer market that they are wholesaling into in the United States of America suddenly find that there's a market advantage for them to leave the Saskatchewan market and go to another market, such as British Columbia, or even if it's Ontario or wherever it is, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to lose some market advantage here in Saskatchewan and that will be unfortunate.

So I think that's why in this Bill we need to see some very definitive, definitive direction, Mr. Speaker, as to why we need to change this long-term and non-transferable tenures to a smaller degree.

Now we know that, you know, we have huge tracts of land in Saskatchewan that belongs to the Crown, Mr. Speaker. And we certainly don't want to be thinking about turning over to the bid system the entire province of Saskatchewan and we don't think that that's appropriate either. But we should be able to come up with a percentage of the forest that is harvested every year that could be put up for the bid system.

And so on this side of the House, we'd like to see the type of legislation that would be very definitive, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this type of concerns that is being brought forward by the United States, that's actually been set out in their . . . a policy paper by the United States government. They would like to see some changes to the long-term, non-transferable tenures, Mr. Speaker, because what they see is, is that these tenures do not create a fair base price for the timber.

What they see this as is just one agent, one agency and the government setting the price — this is what the stumpage fees are. The consumers see this as having an unfair advantage because what it creates then is a pricing system for stumpage that is set arbitrarily, Mr. Speaker, and not seen as having the opportunity for the marketplace to be able to establish stumpage fees.

And so, Mr. Speaker, that's four of the issues I think that the United States . . . this United States policy paper has raised.

There's a fifth one that I'd also like to bring up too, and there's concern amongst our consumers to the south of us, and they want to know definitively the prices that are being provided by forestry companies to the owners of the timber. And in Saskatchewan of course that would be the people of Saskatchewan.

And so they feel — especially our competitors in the United States feel — that some of the jurisdictions in Canada are very secretive about what is being done about being public about the

stumpage fees that are collected on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan for our forestry, from our forestry sector, and then does that provide an unfair trading practice by the province of Saskatchewan for forestry companies trying to deal in the province of Saskatchewan?

And so these are five areas that they'd like to see addressed. Now we take these five areas that the government already knew about, the NDP government already knew about and certainly weren't . . . didn't allow the opposition the opportunity to know that this, that these are some of the areas that had to be addressed. But what we're knowing now, Mr. Speaker, is that these are the five areas that need to be addressed but this Bill actually only deals with three of them.

And so if this Bill deals with three of them, does the NDP government actually believe that if they deal with three of these issues and not the other two, then do they feel strong enough, Mr. Speaker, that the United States will be able to accept that we have gone far enough in Saskatchewan in addressing this policy paper in the United States, these five, five points that they are very concerned about?

Well, Mr. Speaker, I think this is the type of issues that are being raised in the forestry sector. There's five concerns raised by the United States of America, our largest consumer. Three of them are going to be addressed by the province of Saskatchewan. But if we only address three, does that mean the United States will accept, well three out of five is enough?

I think what we're hearing, Mr. Speaker, when we talk to the forestry sector, they have a great deal of concern that we need to address all five areas of concern raised by our largest consumer outside of Canada. And so then why not have an Act coming forward, a Bill coming forward this year to address all five areas of this issue so that we can put Saskatchewan at the leading edge, at the leading edge, Mr. Speaker, of being able to eliminate the softwood lumber tariff, this injury duty that has been applied against our softwood lumber in Saskatchewan?

And so, Mr. Speaker, we know that the forestry sector is very keenly interested in this Bill and how it turns out, and actually the Saskatchewan Party has been working very closely with the players in the forestry sector in Saskatchewan. And certainly we have done due diligence on this side in getting that information out to them. And so we're still waiting for some responses back. We've received a lot of responses back; there's still some more we'd like to get. And so it would be more appropriate at this time, Mr. Speaker, that we adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(15:45)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Labour

Vote 20

Subvote (LA01)

The Deputy Chair: — I recognize the minister and ask the

minister to introduce her officials.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-Chair. Today I have with me, to my right, Christine Tanner, the deputy minister of Labour. And directly behind Christine is Mr. Jim Nicol, the assistant deputy minister. And directly behind myself, we have John Boyd, the executive director of planning and policy division.

And seated behind the bar we have Eric Greene, director of labour standards; Cheryl Senecal, director, prevention services; Dawn McKibben, director, human resources and administration; Sharon Ackerman, manager of budget and operations; Glennis Bihun, manager of occupational health and safety partnerships; Jan Joel, senior policy analyst, the Status of Women office.

And from the Workers' Compensation Board, directly behind Mr. Boyd, we have Peter Federko, the executive . . . or chief executive officer. And Gail Kruger is behind the bar, vice-president of finance and information technology.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and welcome to the officials. I guess this would be our third and perhaps final time to go through estimates with the Department of Labour.

There are a few questions that were I guess unanswered and I want to pursue a little bit further from our last go-round in estimates. Most of my questioning today is going to be centred around WCB (Workers' Compensation Board) but I'll try and have some more questions to keep the other officials entertained while we're here.

A Member: — We don't want them dozing in the background.

Mr. McMorris: — That's right. I'd hate to just have it strictly to WCB. But we were talking the last time and we were going through the annual reports, and it took us quite a while to figure out, you know, the 2002 and the 2001 annual reports because there were some discrepancies in the numbers.

I've since talked with the minister a couple times on that very thing, about the numbers as far as year in a glance and we . . . I'm very aware of the fact that those are rounded off numbers. They're not the exact number. But I know they're not rounded off by 20 and 30 and \$40 million. They're rounded off by thousands of dollars.

And the minister explained to me — mainly behind the bar, but also I guess maybe I'd get her to put it on record again — that the 2002 annual report, when we look at year at a glance, the numbers are incorrect at the year in a glance 2002 numbers. Not the year 2002; the annual report 2002. There was a, I guess a couple of typos, and the numbers in year in a glance were incorrect. And we established the fact that in the 2001 annual report the year in a glance numbers were correct.

And I guess just to get that base level to start with, if I could just have the minister comment on that. We realize that there were some typos, some incorrect numbers given in the 2002 annual report year at a glance when we refer to the years of 2000 and 1999.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Vice-Chair, the member is correct that the year at a glance in the 2002 annual report is incorrect. There is some figures that were brought forward incorrectly but the audited portion of the statement are correct. That has been gone through by the Provincial Auditor as well as the WCB's external auditor, so the audited statements are correct.

Mr. McMorris: — Well that's a relief. But they also . . . I know the minister has referred me a couple of times to the . . . If I go back into the report and just don't go year at a glance, if I go back into the report and look at the audited financial statements of WCB, that it will spell out what you are saying, that the one annual report, the numbers were carried forward incorrectly.

And so that's what I did. I went back just one more year to the annual report of 2000 and I looked at the audited statements of the year 2000 in the annual report. And the annual report states that the reserve and injury fund, which is this number that we've been in discussion over, is \$136,992,000, or \$137 million. And that's the financial . . . that's the statement audited . . . the financial audited statement that appears in the 2002 annual report. And it also appears in the 2002.

The one discrepancy is this 2001. Now you're saying this is the correct number in 2001; the incorrect number is in 2002. But when you go back one year to the year 2000 here, the numbers jive. And I guess all I'm saying is how would that be then, how come the financial statement in the year 2000 annual report jives with the 2002 annual report which you say is incorrect?

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

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair, with leave to introduce guests.

Leave granted.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Deputy Chair, and thank you members for interrupting. I just would like to introduce to the Assembly my son, Eric, who is here today visiting. I likely won't be able to get back to my other son's grade 8 grad so he's come down to soften the blow.

And I'd like all hon. members to welcome Eric to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(16:00)

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund

Labour

Vote 20

Subvote (LA01)

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for your patience.

Now I believe you are looking at the year at a glance, and what . . . the 2000 annual statement was not adjusted until 2001. And I believe what you're doing is comparing the 2000 annual report to the 2002 annual report and the auditor's restatement of the figures, the \$33 million — and that's rounded off — and they are restated in the 2001 annual report. And if you will look at note no. 16 in the 2001 annual report, it will give you a better explanation or a clearer explanation of this.

When you're looking at the year at a glance, as I say, the accounting adjustment was back to the 1999 report. It was a \$33 million adjustment where the auditor restated the figures, that the \$33 million was not a reserve and that it was a liability. So we're looking back years, but because the reports and the restating was done in hindsight, you have to go back farther and look at the figures.

But the note 16 in the 2001 annual report gives you a clearer explanation of the adjust . . . or the restating.

Mr. McMorris: — Well thanks, Madam Minister, because I mean really it's very important that we understand that. I mean we stood up here and we said that there was an 87 million loss in WCB the year previous, and 93.5 or . . . I forget the exact number this year, this past year. And then when you start dealing with the numbers, they don't exactly jive.

Now I realize that there is some adjusting. But just simply going back to the — you know, as you stated to me a couple times through question period and in other venues — go back to the financial statement and that will tell you. You can't do . . . Just look at year in a glance; go back to the financial statements. And that's what I did and it became certainly no more clearer.

In fact it really became a little confusing because, as I said, the 2000 annual report signed off by the auditors jives with the 2002 annual report, and the one that is incorrect is the 2001 which you are saying is the correct one because of the writedown. And we can probably spend a lot more time on that but we're not going to.

Some of the other issues that I had though regarding the WCB are regarding the industrial safety programs and in particular for example PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association) which has its own safety program. I realize it's funded through WCB.

But can you explain some of the changes? I've talked to a number of business owners that are under the PIMA umbrella that are concerned with some of the changes that are going on with the safety programs that PIMA has . . . And it's not only PIMA. I mean I'm thinking there's a number of safety organizations that do safety programs for their members that are funded wholly or at least partially by WCB. And there are some changes that the board is looking at in that whole area.

Could you explain to me some of the changes as far as the safety programs offered by associations for their membership? What changes does the WCB want to see in that area?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much for the question. The concerns that you kind of touched on about PIMA and the safety programs and any changes that are being looked at, there

are nine safety associations that receive their funding through premiums or it comes from the premiums within industry.

And what the board has done is initiate a policy that the safety associations need to be administered by a separate board that has equal representation from both the employers' side and the employees' side. From previous experience, we know that having boards set this way increases the accountability and also the effectiveness of the programs that are run and the monitoring of the programs, the safety programs.

Mr. McMorris: — So I guess my question then, if you're going to a separate board, employer and employee sitting on the board that will administer these . . . administrate and administer these programs and they feel that that is maybe a more accountable way, have there been problems in the past? Has there been any problems in the past with any of these organizations — of the nine safety associations that you had mentioned — had there been problems with accountability to warrant moving in this direction?

Again talking to the organizations that I've had the opportunity of talking to . . . Now I shouldn't say organizations, but businesses that are operated under these umbrella organizations felt that the program had been working very, very well prior to this new structure that WCB is asking.

So I guess, what evidence is there, what are all the examples that are causing the WCB to go to this board structure?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Prior to the requirement and the changes that were put in place for the separate boards that oversaw or governed the safety associations, there had been some problems in some associations. And by the way that these associations are funded and through the WCB's involvement in collecting the premiums that are used to fund these associations to address the situation, this policy was put in place.

(16:15)

And it doesn't matter . . . There had been problems in the past, not necessarily with PIMA. But being the nine safety associations are all funded the same, they are treated the same so this requirement was put in place. And you know yourself, the questions to government, the demand for accountability and accessibility, that those standards run through just about everything in today's life. There is a higher demand for accountability.

So this is the policy that was put in place. And like I say, there was problems, not necessarily with PIMA and the safety association, but all nine associations have been given this same policy and set up to address those concerns.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Minister. So I guess my concern then would be that if there has been some concern, if there have been some problems in the nine safety associations — you're saying not PIMA, maybe eight out of the nine have been fine — you're changing the rules for all nine to operate, how all nine operate, when there may have only been some isolated problems with one or two that could have been dealt with directly.

And you're putting in another structure, a whole . . . changing the system, which once again . . . And you may have more information. Well you do have a lot more information than I do. I don't know how much problem there was. Is it an isolated situation? Is there one safety association that was giving problems and the other eight were operating and functioning properly, but hence you're changing the structure for all nine now because one was operating not as transparent as what it should have been?

I'd be very interested in finding that out because I know the associations are saying why the change; we didn't see that there was anything wrong. If you could tell me that the majority of them were operating without due diligence, not operating correctly, then maybe that would explain the change. But right now I'm having a hard time understanding why you'd change the structure for all nine safety organizations when there may have only been an isolated situation.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, the board policy that covers all nine of the safety associations has really put in place that all safety associations are treated the same. We can go into all the issues of increasing accountability and increasing the effectiveness of the safety associations, but really what it gets down to, more directly to your question, the safety associations have chosen to be funded through their WCB premiums.

They chose this method of collecting the funding for the safety associations within their codes and classifications. The classification that PIMA is the designated contact for, and connection I guess, to the safety association for that code — I think it's an M90 industrial code that they're classified under — but it covers more than just PIMA members. Other small manufacturers that are within that industry code also contribute to the safety association and are covered by that association in the programming that it does.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one final question in this area. There's no intent then through WCB to move all the training, the safety training out from underneath these organizations? It will still be the responsibility of these organizations to do the training in their area? There's no intent to move it out from underneath these organizations into a totally separate structure, which then I guess starts a whole new structure out there? I guess I'll leave it at that and I'll hear your answer.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I'm not sure where this comes from but there is no intention to transfer the training or the trainers to any other area. It's still the responsibility of the safety association to provide the training that they currently do.

Through the Department of Labour and through the WCB, we have launched the work safe program, which really works with partners throughout the various industries. We have found over a number of years that working with partners with various expertise is really the most effective way. And we have worked over the last year especially to build these partnerships and to maintain them and in fact expand them so we have the best safety coverage in Saskatchewan and the coverage that Saskatchewan workplaces and workers deserve.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I'll be glad to hear that, that there's no intention at all to move the

programming, safety programming, out from these nine different associations in the near future anyway.

Another issue that I just wanted to bring up was the direction of the mandate of occupational health and safety officers. Has there been any change in the role of OH&S (occupational health and safety) officers in the last year?

And this comes from minutes from a Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce meeting where there was some concern as to really the direction and the role of these officers going from more of a kind of a liaison person to more of an officer type, ticketing for offences and that type of thing.

Has there been a change in the mandate or the direction of the OH&S officers?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Well I guess when you talk about occupational health and safety officers, they have never been just a liaison officer with business. They do a variety of . . . or play a variety of roles within the occupational health and safety division. They do investigations. They do follow-ups on complaints or concerns that have been expressed.

We get into our OH&S committee minutes. They can do follow-up on issues that show up repeatedly in minutes that are sent into the department. They can also do investigations where no minutes show up from a business. By law, those need to be filed at the department. If businesses are sending in minutes that say no problem, month after month after month, that's not . . . it's a highly unlikely. Then they do investigations to see if things, meetings are held properly.

They do training. I mean, there's a huge range of issues that they cover.

One of the problems that we have found is that the OH&S system, in many instances, is based on compliance with the legislation and the regulations that are in place. Non-compliance is becoming a larger issue in certain areas. And we have certain employers that are repeat offenders, I guess is the best way to put it.

So what we have been doing is looking at the various ways to increase compliance and ways to use the enforcement tools that are already within the Act and if there are things that we should be doing to increase compliance in repeat offenders. So that's what we're looking at.

And we've been exploring different ways of doing that, throwing out some issues and getting responses back from various stakeholders. The chamber of commerce is one of those that we have had discussions with.

Right now what we can do is issue letters of warning. Officers will do a report. They can be contravened for contraventions. We can issue stop work orders. And stop work orders not for a total business but in certain areas. Say a scaffolding was put up wrong, was unsafe, we could stop work in that area.

And then we jump right to prosecutions. So there is a huge gap in there where there's some concerns, that there should be

something in between that we can do. So that's probably the concerns you heard was we have been tossing out some ideas, getting some responses back from stakeholders as to what is appropriate and what things we should be doing.

There is an issue here too and it ties back to your previous comments when we're talking about WCB. And I know in the annual report there's a concern that injury rates and claim rates are climbing. So the two are really tied together. That we need to express the . . . I mean the insistence, insist really that health and safety is a savings and it can have multiple effects in a workplace — more productive, safer workplaces are a proven fact. It really affects on the employer's bottom line.

So these are what we're looking at in some of the issues that we have because they tie together not only with health and safety and the productivity in your workplace but also ultimately on your WCB rates. So safety is an issue all the way around.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Minister. I guess, certainly when I said that the OH&S offices are just a liaison, I realize the role that they play. I'm not slighting that in any way.

But I do know that people are . . . some businesses are concerned that their role may go more from what you just explained to more of an officer that's out looking hard for trouble and trying to find trouble and, you know, charge the outfit.

You were saying that in some cases, you know, there are some businesses out there that maybe don't have safety as a high priority and certainly I would think that would be very few and far between. Just talking to the number of business owners that I have talked to, they realize that, you know, safety is an extremely high priority, the highest priority for keeping their employees safe.

But they also are concerned that they're doing everything in their power and now is the mandate of the officers coming around going to have changed. They have probably a good working relationship with them but they're concerned that there could be a change in direction; the next time those officers knock on their door of their business that, you know, they're being maybe not as much of a person to work with but a person that's looking for trouble in their business and I understand the warning.

But I just want to make sure that I've got that right, that there's no change in direction in that perspective.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, for the member opposite, the department has an occupational health and safety council established that gives the department advice on these issues. It is a council that is set up and it has a number of employee and employer representatives from various industries.

And this is one of the recommendations that they made to us was: when we know that the injury rate is increasing, and the accident rate is increasing — and we're currently at an all-time high — they stressed to us and recommended to us that we look at ways of enforcing compliance.

And also, these are some of the options that they have given to us, that we are talking to with other stakeholders, various

recommendations that the council sends back to us. But the enforcement is one that they have targeted as maybe a way of increasing compliance.

And also, they have given us a recommendation to look at publicizing contraventions, that that may be a way of also enforcing and increasing compliance.

So those are just a couple other issues that are out there that we are looking at.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Minister, I'm also interested in the particular line of questioning that my colleague was taking.

You mentioned the council that advises occupational health and safety. I wonder if you could outline for me just who is on that particular council, who are the representatives on it, what industries they represent, and whether or not they believe that it's a good policy to have public humiliations as one of the enforcement tools?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — For the member opposite, the members of the committee are Jackie Griffith from Saskatoon, representing the public sector; Roy Howell representing the mining association, Jerry Huget from Regina, representing the firefighters; Garth Ivey from Regina, representing IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers); Don Grant is the Chair — he was formerly from SAHO (Saskatchewan Association of Health Organizations); Mike Hogan from Lanigan, representing the SMA (Saskatchewan Mining Association); Jack Matheson from Regina, representing IPSCO; Pat Riley from Moose Jaw, the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers; and Sherri Lynn Swaney from Battleford, representing the meat industry.

What I referred to before was really at the . . . The council put forward recommendations, and it was really twofold. One was that there should be some investigation and research done into the effective use of the enforcement tools that are currently available under the Act. And also, now I may have not explained this properly or worded it properly, but there are other . . . The second part of the recommendation was that we should do some research into the effectiveness of publicizing offences.

I mean, currently some offences are publicized. We don't put out press releases on it or post them on a bulletin board anywhere, but the news media will pick up some of the more serious ones, if there's a serious accident or a fatality, or prosecutions, or fines. Those will currently be picked up the media.

But we were directed by the Occupational Health and Safety Council to do some more research on this to see if it is effective. And it's something that's done in other jurisdictions quite a bit, so we're going to do some research on that.

(16:45)

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Madam Minister. Perhaps I'll ask my questions more in a block so that we can proceed a little quicker.

I'm wondering how many occupational health and safety officers there are in Saskatchewan; what the turnover rate is there? Also what are the qualifications necessary for an occupational health and safety inspector; what training they receive?

And specifically in relationship to a letter I have from a constituent, I'm interested in particularly what qualifications, what experience, what training they might have in the oil patch and particularly with drilling rigs?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, within the department there is 25 persons that are designated as workplace safety, with the designation workplace safety officers. There's 43 in total that are designated as officers, and their qualifications vary on the . . . depending, depending on the area that they may work in. Many are hired as specialists — whether for mine safety, ergonomics, hygienists. But if the member is interested, we can get you the training manual. Or training is continual in these areas but the policy and procedures manual goes into quite a bit of specifics on each of the areas, so we can get you a copy of that.

But the turnover rate, I will have to get back to the member on that. We don't . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Oh, the oil patch stuff? We can get you more specifics on that and the turnover rate.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Madam Minister, thank you. I appreciate the offer to get the information for me. The other item on this particular area dealing with the oil patch, I'm wondering how the industry in total compares to industry in general — so the oil industry versus the industry in general, how their accident rate compares through WCB. And within the oil industry itself, where do the drilling operations, how do they compare to the oil industry in general, to determine, you know, whether those are that much more dangerous, if they are more dangerous, Madam Minister?

I know that a good many young people in Saskatchewan work in that industry. They're highly paid, which would seem to indicate that it is a dangerous industry and therefore it takes a larger salary or a greater salary to attract people into that industry. So I'm just wondering what the statistics are on that, also on how often drilling rig operations are inspected by OH&S officers.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, if the member opposite has a 2002 annual report of the WCB, on page 24 there is the injury rates and claims duration for rebatable subclasses. And I believe you were asking about oil well servicing. If you look down the chart it's D4. Your percentage of workers injured with time loss is 6.79. And when you look at all classes an average of, province-wide, it would be 4.95. So it is higher.

There is also average days on that chart too. So if the member has the time to look at that it may give you a lot more information than what you have asked for.

The oil well servicing is really among the eight identified high-risk injuries . . . industries . . . Sorry, let's start that again. This is included in the eight identified high-risk industries and they have been targeted with some specific initiatives that

would mean they would have increased inspections. Now for actual numbers, I don't have that with me today but we can get it to you.

Mr. McMorris: — I just have a . . . I realize our time is almost to an end here, but I have a couple more questions regarding WCB and just some of the, I guess . . . I've heard that they were going through some renovations at their head office. Could you explain to me what renovations are going on there, roughly cost, and the last time it had been renovated? When's the last time it had been renovated, the cost, that type of thing? If you could answer that, please.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Chair, the building has never been renovated since it was built in the early '90s so this is the first project that WCB has undertaken.

The renovations currently, the renovations currently are done to accommodate occupational health and safety standards and they are done also to accommodate the new team-based case management. The renovations were begun late in 2001, and they are being done over a three-year period and will be finished in the year 2004.

The total cost of the renovations have amortized over a 15-year period at an annual cost of 284,000, but what the renovations have also done in accommodating the team-based case management group . . . persons, is the renovations have allowed the WCB to end the lease on the 12th floor of the building. They were able to move those folks into the newly renovated areas which has meant a cost saving in the administration area of WCB of 252,000 a year.

Mr. McMorris: — Just so I can be clear on the one issue, you said \$284,000 amortized over 15 years. Is that 284,000 over the 15 years or 284,000 per year over 15 years?

An Hon. Member: — For 15 years.

Mr. McMorris: — For 15 years, yes.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — It's the annual cost for 15 years.

(17:00)

Mr. McMorris: — So it's 284,000 or . . . we'll round it down — 280,000 per year for 15 years to pay for the renovations that started in late 2001 and that'll be completed in 2004?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Just to remind the member that these renovations were begun late in 2001. They have an annual cost of \$284,000 that has been amortized over a 15-year period.

But you also need to remember these renovations have allowed the WCB to end the lease on the 12th floor of their office building which is a savings of \$250,000 that they previously would have paid. So there's a savings. So you have a net cost of \$32,000 a year.

The committee reported progress.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:03.

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