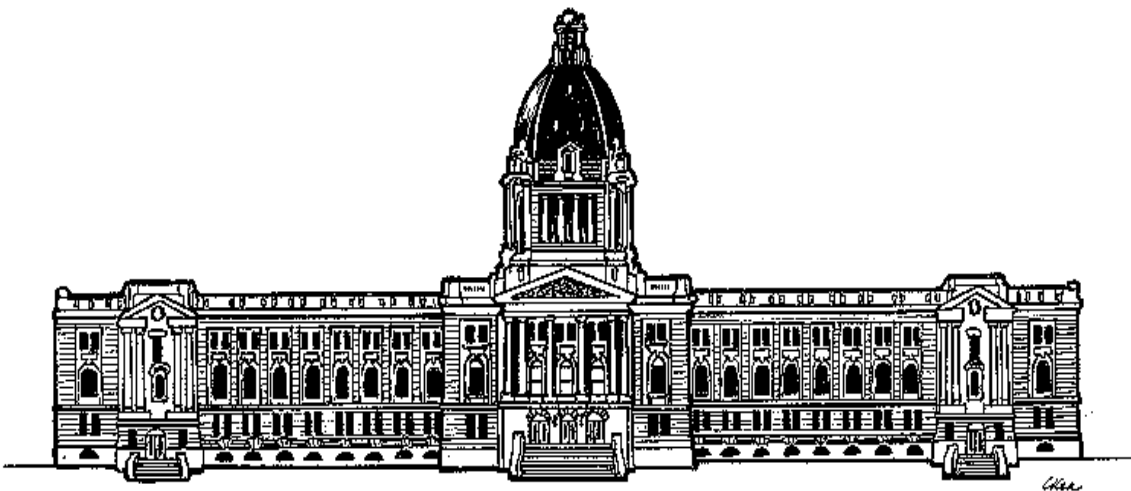




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES
2004**

Mr. Graham Addley, Chair
Saskatoon Sutherland

Mr. Wayne Elhard, Deputy Chair
Cypress Hills

Mr. Dan D'Autremont
Cannington

Mr. Andy Iwanchuk
Saskatoon Fairview

Mr. Warren McCall
Regina Elphinstone-Centre

Hon. Maynard Sonntag
Meadow Lake

Mr. Randy Weekes
Biggar

The committee met at 15:00.

The Chair: — Order. The first item before the committee, it is Bill No. 14, The Highway Traffic Amendment Act. We have Mr. Elhard, Mr. D'Autremont, Mr. Weekes, and as well we've got Ms. Atkinson sitting in for Mr. Sonntag, Mr. Iwanchuk, and Mr. McCall is just visiting with a school group, he'll be joining us shortly.

I would recognize Mr. Sonntag to introduce his officials.

**Bill No. 14 — The Highway Traffic
Amendment Act, 2004**

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Seated immediately to my right is Larry Fogg, our president of SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance). Seated to Larry's right is Bernadette McIntyre, the assistant vice president of driver and vehicle safety services. Immediately to my left is Bruce Kush, manager of vehicle registration. And seated behind me is Julianne Jack, supervisor of communications.

Clause 1

The Chair: — Okay. Clause 1, short title. Is the committee ready for the question? I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'd like to welcome the officials from SGI accompanying the minister today. We look forward to the opportunity to ask questions on the Bill that's presently before us. We would ask that we would . . . the committee would allow our colleague from the constituency of Humboldt to begin the questioning this afternoon.

The Chair: — Ms. Harpauer.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. This Bill has a number of initiatives that the opposition is in favour of and going to support wholeheartedly. There's a number of areas of course that are just housekeeping in nature.

But we support making it an offence to alter a photo identification card. We support the Bill making . . . or adding consistency to the speed limit allowed in school zones. And I particularly commend the minister for choosing to conduct consultations with Saskatchewan municipalities before deciding what that ultimate province-wide speed limit will be.

We also support adding tow truck operators to the list of workers on our highways that need to be protected by passing traffic with a speed limit. We support the new impoundment provisions. And we support the seatbelts being required when driving a vehicle in reverse — although I didn't know that we could, part of that, drive in reverse without a seatbelt. There's other areas that I have questions. It's not necessarily that we don't support it, but we just needed some clarification.

So I'm going to begin with the first page of the Bill that deals with the new registration requirement for farm trailers over 4,600 kilograms. It appears to be a fairly reasonable restriction requirement, but it's my understanding that there will be two

options made available to farmers. One will be an annual registration that will include insurance; and the other will be a one-time registration for as long as the farmer owns his trailer, but it will not include insurance coverage; and both options will cost \$32. Am I correct?

Mr. Fogg: — That's correct. If you choose the one with insurance, the \$32 will be annual. If you choose the one without the insurance, the \$32 will be perpetual so you'll only pay the \$32 once.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. Since the trailer will be registered, if the farmer lends the trailer to a neighbour who is not a farmer, can his neighbour or his friend legally pull that trailer?

Mr. Kush: — It's only in the operation of that on a farmer's farm. Two farmers can trade trailers but a farmer cannot give his trailer to another non-farmer for use, for non-farm use.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. That's all I had on that particular section.

On the second page subsection 8(2) and (2.1), there was some concerns that were brought to me, and in particular with (2.1)(a). It states that:

The board may rehear or review an application pursuant to subsection (2) only if it is satisfied that there is new evidence that:

there is new evidence that:

(it) was not available at the time of the initial decision . . . (and) order; and

. . . (it's) important and relevant to the initial decision . . . (and) order; and

it is important . . . in the public interest to rehear or review the initial decision or order."

The list of criteria that must be met appears to empower the board a great deal, and the concern was that it may have the potential to make it extremely difficult for an individual to have any ruling that has been brought against him to be reheard. The feeling was that the board will naturally be reluctant to rehear a case because in doing so they are tentatively admitting that they may have made a mistake and, in essence, there is a concern that this puts up a significant barrier to any individual's ability to appeal in a ruling.

The minister's explanation for the change was:

. . . the Highway Traffic Board is . . . currently bogged down in hearing appeals with many appellants continuing to appeal issues after the board has made a decision. This backs up the hearing process and increases the amount of time other appellants must wait to access an initial hearing. The proposed amendment will clarify the board's authority. Once the board has heard an appeal and rendered a decision, that decision will be final and cannot

be . . . (repealed) back again to the Highway Traffic Board. The only exceptions will be where an appellant can prove they have new evidence or their circumstances have changed since the initial hearing . . .

On average, how often does the Highway Traffic Board meet and on average how many hearings would they have in any given year?

Ms. McIntyre: — I don't have the exact numbers, but the full Highway Traffic Board meets monthly as a full board. They also have a large number of hearing officers. And depending on the demand they do both; depending on the kind of appeal they do both phone appeals and they do in-person appeals because they do appeals on a multitude of different topics from restricted driver's licences to appeals on carriers' safety ratings. There's a number of things. So they have hearings almost well multiple times a week depending on the need.

Maybe just to comment on what you're looking at there. The appeal criteria that we've looked at for rehearing, there had been a number of instances where there had been some legal games being played, and there had been some wasting of time on moot points. What we have done is modelled this after what other jurisdictions have used for similar appeal bodies. And it has been fairly successful in making sure that the correct appeals and rehearings have gotten through to the appropriate authorities.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that answer. So the reason for this is of course needless hearings and a backlog. On average right now with the existing Act, how long would an individual have to wait before his case would be heard?

Ms. McIntyre: — It really depends on the type of hearing. On impoundment hearings they're heard usually within 48 hours. On restricted driver licence hearings they can be heard . . . they're usually heard within five working days, most often sooner than that. And on the carriers, that involve the carriers, sometimes there's a longer timeline on that, mostly because the carrier is bringing in legal counsel and quite often coming in out of province.

But those are always coordinated with whoever has the hearing to be most convenient for them. So there's very rare circumstance that a customer is ever held up on a hearing.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you. Now again this has to do with appealing the initial decision — how often, once an initial decision has been made, how often would they appeal and continue that process?

Ms. McIntyre: — The most often that we have the rehearings is on the carriers' safety ratings and if they have an established place of business. And that's really what this amendment is to address is to get away from a carrier continuing to be able to operate in Saskatchewan when they don't have an established place of business and they keep asking for rehearings on technicalities. And really then we're incurring losses with somebody we're insuring that we shouldn't be, and it's costing the Saskatchewan people money.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize Mr.

D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. A question along that line of questioning dealing with the Highway Traffic Board. How many emergency appeals would the Highway Traffic Board hear related to unlicensed drivers who . . . vehicle that they're driving is impounded?

Ms. McIntyre: — I don't have the exact figures with me, but you mean that the vehicle's been impounded and then they're asking for an early release for hardship reasons or whatever. I believe we impound, I think it's between 3 and 5,000 vehicles a year and most of those vehicles are . . . A hearing is asked for very quickly after that.

A portion of them are released because quite often the people aren't driving their own vehicle or it's the only family vehicle. However, you know the impoundment has been a legal rightful impoundment but the release occurs because of some other reason. We only have less than half a dozen incorrect impoundments annually. I can get you those exact figures though if you'd like.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, yes, I'd be interested. But I'm interested in those . . . I'd be interested in all the numbers but I'm specifically interested in those that could be deemed as emergency, such as you know somebody's driving a vehicle that's . . . they don't have a licence. The vehicle is impounded, but yet it's the only family vehicle. There's an ill person in the family, they need it back immediately not within three to five days but more or less, you know within 24 hours.

Ms. McIntyre: — If those kind of circumstances occur Monday to Friday, there have been situations where the board has heard that vehicle impoundment this very same day.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I know when these changes were initially put in place the recommendation of the Safe Driving Committee was that that appeal process be available for emergencies on a 24-hour basis that . . . And I'm just wondering how that was working and how many of those types of appeals you are hearing?

Ms. McIntyre: — We've been very successful on this because most of the appeals are — or most of the impoundments are very legitimate. So far, what we've been handling there has only been . . . I dealt with one last week where what we ended up doing for them was switching vehicles.

They'd ended up having a vehicle that had some commercial equipment in it and we had accommodated them because it had happened after 5 o'clock on a Friday afternoon. Luckily some of our officials were still in the office, they arranged that switch of vehicles so that there's still a vehicle impoundment.

But that's probably been the only instance where — that we are aware of — that has happened outside of what we could accommodate in the last two years.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize Ms. Harpauer.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I am going now to

page 7, so it's a new section, 70.1 and I just have a question that's more curiosity than anything else. That's the section that makes it an offence for a commercial vehicle to have a radar warning device.

Are there any provinces left that do allow them? I was on the understanding that it's pretty much banned in commercial vehicles across the country.

Ms. McIntyre: — In the United States, it's a federal law so it is decreed across all of the United States. In Canada, it is a law not to have radar detectors in commercial vehicles at this point up and . . . coming east to west, up into the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border.

Now we've proposed it for Saskatchewan, but Alberta and BC (British Columbia) will still allow it. And they have, at this point . . . I was just consulting with them and, at this point, they have no plans to introduce a law as we have to be consistent with the rest of North America.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you for that answer. And we're going to skip a few more pages to page 9 sub-section 81.5, which deals with the safety fitness certificate requirements. This section states that and I'm just going to read the beginning:

Except as otherwise permitted pursuant to . . . (the) Act . . .

Etc., etc., which is a slight change from the original act that stated "no person" rather than "except as otherwise permitted".

Who now could possibly get an exemption from having to have a valid safety fitness certificate or is that change really not significant?

Ms. McIntyre: — It's really a housekeeping change to make us consistent with the National Safety Code. And so, we're adhering to the federal . . . the federal laws under this and just making ourselves totally consistent under that. So it was really a housekeeping.

Ms. Harpauer: — The department's explanatory notes state that it makes it an offence to operate as a commercial operator without a safety certificate. Was this not an offence before, because I thought that they were mandatory prior to the changes in this Bill?

Ms. McIntyre: — Again that's a housekeeping thing that had been missed when we first put the National Safety Code because there was so much stuff to put in. So now, we're making sure we're making our legislation match what it should.

Ms. Harpauer: — So it was mandatory prior to this. Okay.

Going on to subsection 81.6, when were the safety fitness certificates first introduced in our province?

Ms. McIntyre: — I have to double-check. I know that we really started . . . because '98-99, we moved some of the . . . we moved the authority over from the Department of Highways and Transportation in — Bruce, do you remember? — '96 we moved some over. We became fully operational doing the audit as per the national safety code in July 1, 1999; and we were

issuing safety certificates through our system I think about a year prior to that. But if you need the exact date, I can check that.

Ms. Harpauer: — No, I was just wondering you know approximately . . . I have attained a certificate of safety fitness from my neighbour who is a trucking company and it had an issuing date, and it is at that time. It was January, 1998. He didn't recall having been required to have anything prior to that, so I was wondering if that was when the, you know, when the requirement was first introduced in the province.

At the time that the trucking industry was required to have these certificates, was there a fee attached to them?

Ms. McIntyre: — Yes. Actually what happened was when the deregulation of the trucking industry happened, you know, we used to have all the recognized authorities and everything. And when the federal government deregulated the trucking industry, was when the National Safety Code was implemented, and that was when we started issuing national safety certificates.

In Saskatchewan you have a one-time \$50 charge for your national safety certificate. So if you get a new number, you start a new company or a subsidiary, you then have to get another \$50 to get your NSC (National Safety Code) number. However we don't, at this point, charge an annual fee. Most jurisdictions do charge an annual fee, but Saskatchewan doesn't.

Ms. Harpauer: — Yes, again in talking to this particular trucker, he said Manitoba does and it's \$50 a year. Alberta has zero, was what he said. He couldn't recall having to ever pay a fee here. He didn't remember, so obviously the \$50 came and went for him.

The Act states that the operator must apply in writing to have his safety fitness certificate renewed, and I noticed on the safety fitness certificate that I've attained from this commercial driver, that there's no expiry date on it. It has a date where it was issued but there's no expiry date on it. So will the board or the department contact these operators in advance to notify them that their certificates are about to expire and that they will need to be renewed, because I can see this being something that's neglected.

Ms. McIntyre: — What we put that in . . . Again we put that in the entire legislation as to be consistent with the federal National Safety Code because renewals is an option. So it's there for us to use in the future. Right now we don't have to notify them because as you know they're perpetual. They're good for life. If we were ever going to introduce something that they had to renew, it's done . . . it would be done as part of our registration process. Like now when you're coming in to apply, you can do it at any of our motor licence issuers. So we sort of try to have as much as we can, one-stop shopping for our carriers.

Ms. Harpauer: — I think in that answer you just answered the next question because the original Act stated that the safety and fitness certificate expired in five years. And I noticed in the revision, there's no mention of a time period. So I'm assuming that's because it is good to go for a while.

Ms. McIntyre: — Yes, you're correct.

Ms. Harpauer: — The amended Act states that the certificate of safety fitness will have a rating on it:

- (a) satisfactory audited;
- (b) satisfactory unaudited; (and)
- (c) conditional.

Is the notation of a rating, is that new?

Ms. McIntyre: — No, that has been part of the National Safety Code as set out by the federal government since it came into place. Most carriers sit at satisfactory unaudited.

We have been auditing carriers, as I said, since July 1, 1999. We have over 6,000 carriers and they're constantly changing. We average about 130 to 150 audits a year. And some are re-audits. Because if they're audited and become conditional, then they're re-audited again in a year or whatever period of time the Highway Traffic Board may designate. And so some of them are repeat audits.

And what we do is we focus our audits on the carriers that have the highest risk. So they have the highest proportion of accidents, convictions, or inspection tickets.

Ms. Harpauer: — Okay. Another question on that — and it's not because concerns came forward; it's because I'm curious — can you give an example of what restrictions would fall under the conditional rating? Just a couple of examples.

Ms. McIntyre: — Actually the most common restriction that happens — it's not that we're restricting any of their business — but we're saying that they have to have a safety plan. There's quite an extensive safety plan that carriers should have, which monitor the hours of service that they have to . . . You know there's the . . . they can only drive certain hours and then have to rest; that they have correct disciplinary and . . . reporting and disciplinary procedures in place; that they are keeping track of all their tickets; that the drivers are reporting all their tickets. And usually in an audit what you find are violations in hours of service and lack of policies to deal with those kind of things.

So most of the recommendations that have the conditional rating is that they set out the safety plan as well as they give them . . . help them work through a suggested plan on how to reduce their convictions and their at-fault accidents.

So the audit next time, if they have everything in place as per requested in the safety plan, and there's been some reduction in the bad driving they've seen, usually it will move to a satisfactory rate.

Ms. Harpauer: — Great. Again, in talking to my neighbour, he said that he had to pay an annual fee to Manitoba. It's not a certificate of safety fitness. It's, I think, a licence of some sort. But it's the same principle.

Are out-of-province carriers required to have a Saskatchewan

certificate of safety fitness if they're just travelling across our province?

Ms. McIntyre: — No, they're not. What part of this plan is, is that we have the international registration plan where truckers that carry across — and that's an agreement with most jurisdictions across North America — that we sort all of that out and sort of balance out in pay every . . . each other the fees that we need.

And under the national safety certificate, the model is that every jurisdiction issues national safety certificates for the carriers that are base-plated in their jurisdiction. The only jurisdiction that doesn't totally abide by that is Ontario and they require some of the American truckers to also get that because they have such traffic north-south there. So that isn't . . . They aren't totally in sync with the National Safety Code. But all other jurisdictions, it's just who is base-plated and have an established place of business in your jurisdiction.

Ms. Harpauer: — The last area that I had questions was on page 10, which is subsection 81.8 and it deals with orders concerning the operating of commercial trucks and show-cause hearings.

Will the board have the authority to revoke an operator's certificate of safety fitness before the date of his show-cause hearing or does he have the right to have the case heard first before his certificate is pulled?

Ms. McIntyre: — Absolutely. We will not revoke a certificate prior to a show-cause hearing.

The changes here have streamlined how to get some of the safety orders out. There used to have to be a meeting before the meeting with the board, and we ended up having two or three levels of meetings. Whereas if the board can see what they're doing, can issue a safety order, then . . . Because quite often the carriers are quite happy with the recommendations they're getting out of their safety order. Now, there has to be a hearing to deliver the safety order. So if we can . . . if the board can deliver the safety order without a hearing, it saves everybody time and money. And if any of the carriers want to have a hearing because they're not happy with the safety order, then it will be scheduled immediately. So nobody's licence would be revoked without a show-cause hearing.

Ms. Harpauer: — On average, how often would the board find it necessary to pull an operator's safety certificate?

Ms. McIntyre: — It's been very few and far between. I think it's not been . . . I think since '99 we've only had one pulled for safety reasons. The other reasons that they've pulled — and I think there was two or three — were for carriers who were fraudulently saying they were established places of business here, to get the low rates in Saskatchewan. So there's been three or four instances of that.

And that's a fairly long-drawn-out process. And what has happened in other cases is the carrier has agreed to withdraw from Saskatchewan prior to them having been revoked because when they get to this process they realize . . . And these are carriers that want our wonderful low rates here and have a

telephone in somebody's basement.

Ms. Harpauer: — Great. I'm going to turn the questions over to the member from Cannington because you've answered all my questions. And I want to thank you for that.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you very much. Along that line of questioning, I noticed when I went to register my vehicles the question was there: is this vehicle used primarily in Saskatchewan? Is that a new question on the forms because I don't remember it from a few years ago?

Mr. Fogg: — Yes, it's a new question.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. Because I had to admit I didn't remember it being there. So obviously it's been a problem with people from outside trying to license their vehicles here.

I wonder if you could explain the requirements that are reflected in that question and what a person has to meet to fall into a category to allow them to be licensed in Saskatchewan?

Mr. Kush: — Normally what we'd like to do is register vehicle and insure vehicles for Saskatchewan residents. We also provide some registrations and insurance for Saskatchewan residents who work outside of Saskatchewan temporarily and come back every weekend — are residents here.

However, again the requirement is that if a vehicle is going to be used primarily outside of Saskatchewan for the registration period, we ask that they register the vehicle in the jurisdiction they're going to be operating.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I wonder if you could explain to me what you mean by the word temporary. How long of a timeframe does temporary encompass?

Mr. Kush: — At this point temporary workers mean in . . . The way we looked at it is if they were living in a temporary accommodations outside of Saskatchewan, living in a work trailer, living in a hotel, and they maintain their address, and their families still live in Saskatchewan, and they come back, we have a policy of at least 30 days. But we've looked at different situations where it's over 30 days. But that's basically what our policy is in that area.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if they live in a camp trailer or in a hotel, that qualifies as temporary. What if they were to be resident in a company apartment or something like that?

Mr. Kush: — Then we'd have to ask them questions as to whether or not they're resident in Saskatchewan or resident in that foreign jurisdiction, that foreign province. We look at each situation differently. And again we have to determine, and we have to ask them, where is your primary residence? Is it this company apartment, or is it a residence back in Saskatchewan? So again each one is different, and we have to make a decision based on that.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Would that be reflective of where their family members might live? You know it's certainly not unheard of for — particularly in the oil industry — for people to be . . . Their accommodations are someplace other than Saskatchewan for a good part of their working time, yet they claim residence in Saskatchewan, pay their taxes in Saskatchewan. Their families go to school in Saskatchewan. Their spouses live in Saskatchewan. But yet they may be outside of the province for longer than 30 days. So would they still be considered residents of Saskatchewan or residents of the outside jurisdiction?

Ms. McIntyre: — I think with all the comments you've made, that would be a resident of Saskatchewan. The main reason . . . to get back to your original question for adding those questions that we're asking now when you register your vehicle is . . . it's we're not trying to . . . you know, the oil workers or the people, you know, the border people that are legitimately Saskatchewan residents. It's the Alberta residents who are falsely trying to figure out that they're Saskatchewan residents so they can register their vehicles here but still pay their taxes in Alberta. So this is what we're really trying to get at.

And what it ultimately ends up doing is saving Saskatchewan motorists money. We don't want to be . . . you know we're trying to have the lowest rates in Canada, and we're pretty darn close to it. So this is another precaution that we're trying to again . . . (inaudible) . . . people that are really not Saskatchewan residents trying to get in on our good rates.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well unfortunately I had a constituent who fell into the other side of the category, resident here and is working outside of the province. And SGI did finally — he was involved in a traffic accident with his vehicle outside of the province — and SGI did eventually make good the claim, but it took a lot of work to get to that point.

The claim was attempted to be made that he was . . . The vehicle was outside of Saskatchewan for longer than 30 days and so therefore no longer qualified under Saskatchewan insurance. And yet he pays his taxes here, and his family all live here, and it's a temporary work position outside. But SGI did eventually make good on it, and so I guess in that sense that's good.

But I would, you know, hate to see other people have to go through the same endeavours to make good on a claim and prove that they are a resident of Saskatchewan just simply because their employment takes them outside of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Fogg: — Mr. Chairman, I think that's exactly why we asked the question in the first place. We'd like to establish whether they're a resident of Saskatchewan before the claim happens because you're quite right. After the claim happens, then there has to be a lot of work and a lot of investigation when to determine whether or not the person was a resident of Saskatchewan, which is why we ask the question now.

Mr. D'Autremont: — What kind of arrangements does Saskatchewan have with other jurisdictions for people who find it necessary to take their vehicles outside of the province? You know we do have a large number of snowbirds that go south and move, you know, for two or three months, four months,

down to the US (United States), down to southern US for the warmer climates during the wintertime. What's the status of their vehicle insurance when they're out of the province?

Mr. Kush: — Yes, I think it's a situation where they contact the jurisdiction that they're in to see whether or not they're required to register there. Again if the vehicle is going to be used primarily outside of Saskatchewan during a registration term and they're going to be in Arizona for 9 months out of the 12, we ask them to put . . . at some time to put Arizona plates on after the 6 months expire.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So if they were not in Arizona or Texas or wherever — anyplace outside of Saskatchewan, it could be Victoria — if they are not out of the jurisdiction for longer than six months, there would be no need for them to be concerned about the loss of insurance coverage?

Mr. Kush: — That's our position at this point, yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you very much. That's good to know because next time I get a phone call, I'll at least be able to provide some competent answers on that. I think that's all I have. And my colleague from Cypress Hills wants to ask some questions.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I may have missed some of your discussion earlier because I've been preoccupied with some other things.

But one of the questions that has come to my attention, given the proximity of the constituency to the Alberta border, there's a lot of cross-border activity by individuals in the constituency who live in Cypress Hills but work in Alberta. They don't call their work in Alberta permanent because it's usually seasonal. It has to do with young farm fellows who leave the farm to pursue work in the oil fields, most likely in the winter months.

One of the problems we've encountered is the determination of whether or not that individual still remains a Saskatchewan resident. They pay their taxes here. They come to a home base here. Their parents live here. But they can't in some ways satisfy SGI's requirements for residency because they aren't married, and they can't produce rental receipts because they live at home most of the time.

Has this Bill addressed the conundrum that those young people find themselves in who are bona fide Saskatchewan residents but are working in Alberta over the winter months?

Mr. Kush: — It tends to address some of that. Again it is a problem with young people who live . . . when they come back to Saskatchewan and live with their parents. It's much easier to talk about someone who has their own home and their own family as an established residency.

But in most cases what happens with youth like that is that they go outside of Saskatchewan for a period of time. Then they rent an apartment, for example. And then what happens at that point is that the other jurisdiction's rules cut in. And if they're there for more than 90 days, in Alberta's case, then they're required

by Alberta law to get Alberta licence and get licence plates for their vehicles as well.

So again, our Bill and the regulations will address some of that. But again in this case, it's what's the other jurisdiction requirements are with respect to their residency there.

Mr. Elhard: — In the situation like I've just described, the individual, if he comes home on weekends but lives in a camp for instance, on the site, is there some willingness on the part of SGI to consider that not permanent residence or not a residence in Alberta?

Mr. Kush: — This is what I mentioned before. When they're working outside of Saskatchewan, they maintain a permanent residence here and they live in some sort of temporary accommodations in another jurisdiction and come home every about 30 days, then we'll accept them as residents and be able to keep their plates and licences.

Mr. Elhard: — Is it your requirement of agents that sell insurance and do the licensing for these kinds of cases, is it a requirement of your agents to specify very clearly what the obligations are for the individuals in that case? Are they advised in advance that if they spend more than so many days consecutively out of the province, no matter what their long-term residency requirements or situation may be, that they need to call the Alberta license department? Is there a requirement to provide that information? Because I guess what we're finding is that there's too many people who get caught in an accident situation and unprepared to deal with it because of lack of awareness — just lack of information.

Have you required your licence issuers and your insurance issuers to provide that kind of information, and if not, would it not be a good idea?

Mr. Fogg: — Yes, Mr. Chairman, you're quite right. The residency requirements are a very complicated issue, and this Bill and the regulations under the Bill we hope will address some of these.

But what we've tried to do now is put a question that they have to ask each person who registers the vehicle: is this car being used primarily in Saskatchewan? If the answer is yes, then they proceed on. If the answer is no, it is in Alberta, then there's a number of follow-up questions. And so with that kind of information, we should be able to advise the individual whether they qualify as a resident of Saskatchewan, so we can solve some of these problems before there's a claim, because that's when the real difficulties come in.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Chairman, I think the reality is that most of these problems come to the forefront because there is a claim, and that's when the fight's on, and that's when the situation for the individual becomes very muddy and very uncertain and very frustrating.

So I would appreciate any effort SGI might make with their agents to insist that they get as much information from the applicants as possible. That concludes my questions, Mr. Chair.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — Is clause 1 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 19 inclusive agreed to.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — Her Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enacts as follows: the Act may be cited as The Highway Traffic Amendment Act, 2004.

Could I have a member move a motion to report the Bill without amendment? I recognize Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — I so move, Mr. Deputy Chair.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — Okay.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — Next item of business is the Act to amend The Vehicle Administration Act.

Bill No. 48 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004

Clause 1

The Acting Chair (Mr. Iwanchuk): — The next item is consideration of No. 48, 2004, An Act to amend The Vehicle Administration Act. Is there any questions? I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate the opportunity to ask a group of questions and maybe not necessarily in any particular order on Bill No. 48. But there are some interesting elements to this particular piece of legislation that I think the public would like to know some of the background concerning how SGI and the government of the day arrived at these particular issues.

And of course, the number one element of public interest I think is the willingness of SGI and the government to eliminate the front license plate. There's been a lot of — in my experience anyhow — a lot of public agitation to move that direction. But I'm wondering what prompted the government to take this step with this particular piece of legislation and what research they've done in order to justify doing so.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I'll let officials talk about the specific research, but I can tell you a couple of things that has driven it.

One primarily is the issue of the design of new vehicles. You will be aware that many of the new vehicles don't have a location for a front licence plate, so vehicle owners were confronted with the circumstance of either drilling holes in their new bumpers and putting plates on or finding some attachment that would hold a licence plate on the front of the vehicle.

I know I speak not with any specific numbers around it, I can speak anecdotally, and tell you that as an MLA (Member of the

Legislative Assembly) I got quite a number of calls from annoyed vehicle owners, particularly new vehicle owners, who didn't like this circumstance.

The second one, clearly as well, it saves SGI roughly 330,000 a year as I recollect . . .

A Member: — 370.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — 370,000 a year, which is directly a direct saving to the Auto Fund, which will reflect any small way in maintaining the lower rate. So those are the two primary factors. In terms of specific research that was done related to that, I don't know if there was . . . if somebody can add more than I've said.

Mr. Fogg: — We would use of course what goes on in the other provinces and territories, and it was 5 out of the 13 provinces and territories that have two plates and the remainder are down to a single plate.

Mr. Elhard: — I noticed the indication that other provinces and territories had gone in that direction, and it's been a common practice in the United States for a number of years. I'm wondering if you encountered any opposition when you talked to jurisdictions that had not maybe gone to the single plate system. Had you found any rationale or any objection to going that route, that you thought was significant enough you might want to consider that?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Yes, I think it's fair to say that there was. I can't speak about other jurisdictions, but I think here in Saskatchewan it was . . . certain representation was made to myself as minister; there was concern by municipal and RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) as well. They are concerned about the notion that simply one less plate gives them one less opportunity to identify a vehicle; and I think that's understood, and we appreciate that.

At the same time, this has been a discussion that's been ongoing with those police forces for some length of time, I think their understanding generally is, without putting too fine a point on it, this is the way of the world, if you will. Vehicles are changing, every jurisdiction has pressures on them to reduce to the single plate, and while they would like to see, I think it's fair to say the maintenance of two plates, they understand that this is just what's going on in the rest of North America.

Mr. Elhard: — Was the government or SGI under any, not pressure, but was any awareness brought to the discussion about this, that there are jurisdictions who are currently single plate that might go back or revert back to a double plate? Is there active consideration of that possibility?

Mr. Fogg: — I know that Manitoba went at one point in time to a single plate and then went back to a double plate. And the reason that they gave was the concerns of law enforcement; that was the number one reason.

Mr. Elhard: — The reason I'm pursuing this line of questioning frankly is I'm just wondering if we're following a trend here that we might regret at some point? And if we opted at some point in the future to go back to a two-plate system,

would the savings that are generated by the single-plate offering at this point be offset by the costs of reverting to a two-plate system 10 years down the road?

Mr. Fogg: — I don't think there's a lot of complexity to going back to a two-plate system; it's simply the cost of producing that second plate and having people put it on the front of their vehicle. I don't think there's a lot of cost to go back, so I would say no, you won't incur the same kind of costs that we're saving right now.

Mr. Elhard: — And if I understand the information correctly, you will only be introducing a single plate to new plate purchases. People who have double plates now will not be issued new plates to replace the existing plates they've got.

Mr. Fogg: — That's correct.

Mr. Elhard: — But with the legislation . . . It feels like we're in a time delay here; a seven-second delay . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I didn't think I looked like Don Cherry at all. With the — now you've helped remove my train of thought — with the change to the system that we're going to have here, there is no anticipated interest in reverting to a two-plate system or any allowance for that in the future?

Mr. Fogg: — There is no anticipation to go back to a two-plate system, no.

Mr. Elhard: — I think we wanted to put some of these questions on the record because we've had the issue raised with us from some sources about their concerns. As you indicated the police have had some concerns, municipal governments to some extent, and school bus drivers are the other group of people that have indicated they have some issue with this. But I assume that overwhelming public interest in having the one plate will probably trump the concerns of any groups for the time being.

I want to move just briefly to the deductible program that is being provided for in this particular piece of legislation. Can you tell me what the impetus was for introducing this particular program?

Mr. Fogg: — There are individuals in Saskatchewan who for whatever reasons cannot afford to purchase additional insurance, the package policies. And if for example their car is stolen and damaged, they will have to pay their own \$700 deductible. There are times when they can't afford to pay that deductible and therefore cannot get it out of the body shop.

And we just felt that this was something that we could provide to our customers. Although we are not really in the finance business, this was a service that we think we could provide. We would charge a fee of \$30 to do that. That would cover our costs and we would essentially break even on this proposal.

Mr. Elhard: — Is this type of deductible option provided elsewhere in public insurance operations?

Mr. Fogg: — First in North America, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Elhard: — Are you aware of any other opportunity that

might have been in the market to provide this kind of protection? Are there other maybe private sector companies that would have provided protection against deductible costs?

Mr. Fogg: — There are some that do that. Sometimes, the body shops will run their own type of program. But it's not a lot of money because you're financing \$600 to the most part here. So to my knowledge, there's not a lot of interest in the private sector in financing these \$600 loans, especially at the kind of rate of interest we're going to charge.

Mr. Elhard: — So would the body shops, to your knowledge, have financed these deductibles out of their own resources, from their own business finances or was there some other mechanism by which they provided that kind of protection?

Mr. Fogg: — I'm not aware of all the circumstances in which body shops provided it, but there were some body shops that did provide some type of financing. And I'm not sure whether they used their own resources or they used an outside resource. But it was not common right across the province. It was only certain body shops in certain instances.

Mr. Elhard: — I don't know that I have the information available to me, but what does SGI anticipate the cost of this program will be to the company?

Mr. Fogg: — Well we expect that the costs . . . We will break even on the program. We will charge each person a fee of \$30, which will cover our costs. So you're essentially making a \$600 loan for 10 months and our costs are \$30. And so, we will break even.

Mr. Elhard: — So the administrative fee of \$30 will cover what SGI anticipates will be the cost of administration for the program. You did mention a low interest rate though.

Can you give us some information as to what the interest rate will be and what the opportunities might be for SGI to adjust that interest rate?

Mr. Fogg: — It's probably not the exact . . . the term. We're charging a \$30 fee and, imbedded in that fee is something for the lost interest.

Mr. Elhard: — What do you anticipate the uptake of that particular offering might be?

Mr. Fogg: — I haven't got the exact figures, Mr. Chairman, but you can . . . Approximately half the public in Saskatchewan carry extension insurance, so the other half do not. And so we expect a fairly significant take-up. But I'm not sure of the exact figures.

Mr. Elhard: — There are a number of other areas that this particular piece of legislation address. And I'd like to go if we could just quickly . . . Well maybe we should spend more time than just a quickly look . . . a cursory look at the issue. And that's related to impaired driving or drunk driving situations.

Would you describe for us in detail what changes you've made and the rationale for them? Because I think this is a very, you know, crucial part of this particular piece of legislation, and it

certainly is in terms of public safety and awareness around the consequences of drinking and driving.

Ms. McIntyre: — Mr. Chairman, there's two things in here that address very specifically drinking and driving. One is really a housekeeping . . . We introduced a couple of years ago the 90-day administrative suspension. So if you were picked up for .08 BAC (blood alcohol content) or an impaired charge, basically what incurred was you got an immediate 24-hour suspension, as you would even if you got picked up for .04. You then had seven days . . . a seven-day driving permit to get your affairs in order, and then you had a 90-day administrative suspension.

The reason behind that again was to get tough on drinking drivers because prior to having the 90-day administrative suspension, some drivers would through the legal system be able to defer their court date for months, even years. So what we wanted to do was have a vehicle to be able to penalize them immediately and entice them to get into court as soon as possible.

So that has been in effect for over a year and a half and what we found from feedback from law enforcement, we needed to strengthen our legislation to make it very clear that there was the 24-hour prohibition. There was the seven-day driving permit and then there was the 90-day suspension.

And so what we're doing in this piece of legislation is making that very clear based on feedback over the last year and a half from our law enforcement partners who have been very co-operative on this.

So this is definitely something, this is something that's in place in a number of other jurisdictions, it stood up very well, and it is contributing to reducing drinking drivers.

The other initiative that we do have in here is the expansion of the window that we look at drinking drivers in. So right now if you have a drinking and driving offence that happened in year one, is your first one, and then your second one is in year six, we treat you like the first one never occurred. So a number of jurisdictions, and the national strategy on reducing impaired driving, recommends that you look at a 10-year window.

So what we're proposing in this legislation is that we start to move towards the 10-year window. So if this legislation is passed, starting January 1, 2005, we won't let anybody's records of drinking and driving convictions fall off until we get to 2010, so we will build it. We believe you can't go back and say now somebody . . . go back 10 years. But we can say everybody that's in the program now, we will go forward and we'll move to that 10-year window.

The other jurisdictions that have done it have found this very successful because we're knowing one of the emerging drinking driving problems are the perpetual, habitual drinker, and that's something that our strategies are starting to look at. So it's very significant. We think it'll improve the safety on our roads, and we think it's a very important initiative.

Mr. Elhard: — Is there any evidence right now that the success of this elongated window, this 10-year period, has in effect

taken more drinking and driving drivers off the roads? I mean have you seen empirical evidence that it has actually reduced the numbers and frequency of that offence?

Ms. McIntyre: — We don't have empirical evidence at this point because the other jurisdictions that have gone to it, have gone to it just in the last three to four-year period. The anticodotal — that's not right, right? Anyway you know what I mean. Information that we get from the jurisdictions across Canada that have done that is that they believe that it's making a difference, but the numbers we don't have yet.

Mr. Elhard: — I just want to follow up on this issue, and I think my colleague from Cannington has some questions in that particular vein as well. But what we're doing is imposing a more onerous condition by moving from the 5- to 10-year window. Are we also imposing very clear guidelines on how people might eventually get their driving privileges returned to them? Are we making changes in that area in tandem with this particular change?

Ms. McIntyre: — Yes. We're strengthening our programs as we go along. We have — we think — a good program now, but we're strengthening it.

Whenever you're convicted of a .08 and impaired, you have to, in Saskatchewan, to be able to get back on the road — no matter what number of conviction it is. You have to go through an addiction screening process which is done by the health professionals here in Saskatchewan. They do a very thorough job.

At this point, you're only screened one of two streams. You're screened either to a recovery program — so that means that they think you have an addiction problem. And then, it goes into our health care system and they define the program specific to that individual. And they are not then able to get their driver's license back until it comes back that they've completed that program.

Or they are screened to the education program, which is called the driving without impairment program which is a weekend course that they pay for and attend, which has a very high success rate. And usually that's somebody who has made one or two mistakes, and we really just have to drum into their head that they should separate the acts of drinking and driving.

So what we're doing . . . We've found that having just the two streams doesn't meet all the needs and especially with expanding to the 10-year window. So we are working on two faces — one with all the health and addiction specialists to develop a third stream, a middle stream if I could say, because we do have people who . . . just sending them to the education for the weekend isn't enough. But they aren't addicted. And so we're in the process of developing a course that's sort of in between, that we think will work for them.

We're also working with a number of our partners to utilize courses that are already in place. And we already have the authority to be able to send them to very individual programs that are already in place and successful. So we have started doing that about a year ago, and that's proven to be fairly successful in getting the person what they need to make sure

that they don't reoffend.

Mr. Elhard: — One of the concerns or issues surrounding this that I need to know about is when the health professional is asked to take on the challenge of working with somebody who's had these kinds of convictions, how much latitude is that individual given in dealing with the people who've been charged many times with drinking and driving? Is there a very clear set of rules and procedures and guidelines that they follow, or is it pretty much just left to them to determine for themselves whether or not they think the individual in point is worthy of moving on or having his licence and his driving privileges restored?

Ms. McIntyre: — I don't know all the details on this, but I know we work quite closely with the addiction screeners, and we do have an annual conference with them. The Department of Health has a protocol on this, and they use a test and a guideline called the SASSI (substance abuse subtle screening inventory).

Now I'm not sure what that exactly stands for, but there's two standards that are recognized worldwide, and Saskatchewan Health has chosen to use the SASSI test. And that's what all the addiction screeners use throughout Saskatchewan when dealing with our safe driving program. And my understanding is they also use it when they're dealing with alcohol addiction patients outside of our program because we're only a portion of what they deal with.

But they do have that standard and protocol that they go through so that it's used consistently across the province.

Mr. Elhard: — I raise this particular case or this issue because I've had a case brought to my attention where an individual, who had his licence suspended, was dealing with an individual on getting his licence back through, I believe it was, probably the health player in this particular case.

And his frustration . . . I mean he knew he was guilty. He knew he'd offended. He knew that he had to go through certain steps in a program. But he was never made fully aware of what those steps might be, what procedure or timetable might be required, and was never given what he felt was adequate answers in order to meet the requirements so he could move forward. It was I think a frustrating experience for him because he felt it was more counselling than anything. And he never knew for sure where he was falling down or what he needed to do to accomplish, you know, a certain standard or to move his situation forward.

And that's why I asked about the procedures in place. Because I think while it's necessary to make sure that people who are chronic or are several-time offenders in the issue of drinking and driving, they also have to benefit from the reward principle — if they succeed and if they improve and if they show progress, that they ought to be encouraged to do that. And without a clear indication of what the process is and what the steps are, it's hard to achieve that. I think we all respond better to reward than we do to punishment.

So I'm just . . . I guess I want to be clear in my own mind that the process outline for the chronic offender is just as clearly defined as the process might be for the first-time offender.

Ms. McIntyre: — I guess if I can address that is . . . I mean it's up to the health professional. It sounds like in the situation you have, this is somebody who was screened to a recovery program because if they were screened to education or any of the others, it is very specifically set out. When the recovery program is set out, it is the health professional, based on their expertise, that designs that program that's to be individual to the customer or patient they're dealing with.

So we have had the odd situation that's similar to what you have identified. And what we advise is, if it's under our safe driving program, they can contact our office, the driver programs area, and we will work with the customer and the addiction screener to make sure. So if there's any confusion and they're not sure what's happening, we work as partners to make sure that the driver can successfully complete their program. And that's what our objective is, to get people back on the road safely.

Mr. Elhard: — I'd like to move to another area of . . . I'm sorry, maybe I wouldn't. Maybe I'd prefer to give the line of questioning to my colleague from Cannington.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. Yes, along the same line, I wonder if you could describe for us just what's involved in the addiction testing.

Ms. McIntyre: — Well what happens is the addiction screener is supposed to spend somewhere between three and six hours working with the customer that's come in. I believe on the initial visit, they have them complete the SASSI guideline of questions.

And when that's complete, they score that. They take a medical history. They ask for some family history. And then usually on the next visit, it starts into the counselling. And they decide . . . so they try and do with one or two visits, assess where they should be, and then they design the program. And the details of the . . . how addiction screeners go about doing this, I'm afraid I can't help you with, but we could get you information on that. But it is very, very individualized to the person's circumstances and how severe their addiction may be.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Do they ask for medical tests as well, such as liver tests?

Ms. McIntyre: — The addiction screeners . . . you may be referring to . . . Our medical review unit in SGI, up until about three, four years ago, used to ask for that after people had cleared the program. We've discontinued that now for about four years. The addiction screener, I believe being a health professional, has the ability as part of their job to ask for that.

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Dealing with the question along that line, I had some information from a person that was going through the process, and she wanted to know what her rights were at that end because she said the very first time they were there that they wanted to take blood samples, when she went there first. They also wanted to check the condition of her liver; that was

the reason for blood samples. They also wanted her to do a urine test, I believe.

And she was quite I guess shocked because this was her first time that she had been over .08; and probably you know she's not addicted. She's an older person. It happened once; she made a mistake. But she was maybe used to the years before when you lost your licence, you dealt with SGI, and all of a sudden it was like, say, they wanted medical history. They wanted her to do medical tests, and she was asking me if that was appropriate. And I said, well I'll bring it up in committee and ask some questions on it.

Ms. McIntyre: — Addiction screeners do have the authority, being a medical professional, to ask for any of those reports or tests that they feel is warranted in that case. And now it's not common for them to ask for them to give blood tests, but they do most often ask for a medical history.

Mr. Brkich: — And this is a first time offence for her. They did ask for basically the urine and the blood tests. Is that kind of mandatory? I'm asking how many times do they do that, maybe with a first time offence?

Ms. McIntyre: — When the health professional is looking at it, to them they may or may not know it's a first time offence. It's somebody coming that they're screening for the addiction, and again it's up to their professional opinion whether they do that or not. We could try and get some numbers for that, how often it happens, but again it's in the health professionals' hands.

Mr. Brkich: — Yes, I would like some numbers on that to know if it is common practice; are they're doing that with everyone. And she was, I think, even asked before for the samples, before she'd been assessed, because this is what she'd gotten in I think a letter, saying this is what was expected of her, when she went to meet with a particular person at that end. So she was a little shocked, I guess, of what's required.

Ms. McIntyre: — I guess the only thing we can say is we know that statistically, even on a first-time offender when they've been picked up for .08, the stats on that, they have probably driven drunk at least four or five times in their history. So you know again, our whole purpose with this program is to teach people to separate the acts of drinking and driving, and make it safe on the roads for all of us. So you know, they do ask for medical histories on every single person that goes through addictions screening.

Mr. Brkich: — I also asked . . . My question was on the testing. I can see asking if you've did this, a first time offence, the education part of it. But she thought that the testing was quite, say, almost a violation of her right, I guess, to begin with — to ask the medical histories of her family, to ask her to go through medical tests. Like, when did this exactly come through? Is this dealing within this Bill, or had this gone through on past legislation?

Ms. McIntyre: — We'll get you the numbers on the actual tests. But every single person through addictions screening is asked for a medical history and for a family history because alcoholism tends to . . . is a disease, and it is a disease that runs in the family. But I will get you the numbers on the numbers

that are asked for blood and urine tests on their first visit.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. On the medical history, let's say if you . . . a younger person maybe doesn't have that much of a medical history, hasn't been to a doctor, or family doesn't have much medical records if you're on the move — what happens then?

Ms. McIntyre: — That's up to the addictions screener. They have discretion to deal with, again, the customer or patient as they see fit.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Chairman, who pays for the medical testing?

Ms. McIntyre: — Mr. Chairman, whenever SGI directly asks for a non-commercial medical history for SGI's purposes, we do cover from the doctor or the physician the first \$40 which covers most of the cost. If it comes through the addictions screener, they usually will take whatever is on file. But we do know that if that's ever been a circumstance that's been asked, you know, we would cover that. But again it has to be for non-commercial drivers' licences.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Do you have a list also of what they're to . . . for medical tests or is it just up to the assessor to determine what kind of medical tests that he can ask for various testing. Can he ask for repeat . . . for the particular person to come back once a week to be tested for urine? Is there different other tests that they can do? I'm not sure; I've never been through it, so I don't know. But I'll say, I know that there's probably blood, urine.

But she also mentioned that they wanted to test her liver, and I'm not sure how they were doing that, whether they were doing it through the blood or the urine or if there were other kind of skin samples they were taking. Is there any . . . Is it almost up to the assessor to determine how many tests that they can ask for from a doctor?

Ms. McIntyre: — Actually SGI's at an arm's length with this. This is up to the medical professionals. They're professional addiction screeners, and they're treating these people that are sent there from the SGI's safe driving program the same way as they would treat anyone else that's been referred to them from any other agency or any other physician. So it's totally a health issue, and SGI has agreed that they follow those protocols, and we do not interfere.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Does SGI force you to go there? Or let's say you just want to decline to have these tests. What would happen?

Ms. McIntyre: — As part of the safe driving program, you have been convicted of impaired driving or over .08. Driving is a privilege in North America and therefore in Saskatchewan. So one of the conditions we have is getting tough on drinking drivers, is that everyone has to go through the addiction screening if you're convicted of either of those crimes before you can be eligible to have your driver's licence back. And again it's part of a very important safety initiative.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So then if you

refuse then you . . . It doesn't matter; your licence is suspended in perpetuity then until you do the testing.

Ms. McIntyre: — That is correct. That's how our laws work, and that's very consistent across Canada.

Mr. Brkich: — You send these particular individuals to this addiction screening since these people probably deal with . . . that's their line of work to deal with addiction. A lot of these people that probably go through aren't addicted but they . . . I'm taking that these people will assume that everybody that's sent to them is addicted to something.

So I would hazard a guess that they might be very stringent on the testing and very hard on some of the individuals have gone through there, because I know this particular woman was very stressed out with . . . It was almost like this addiction counsellor assumed that she was addicted to everything because she was there, sent through SGI. And she found it quite intimidating that the questions that were asked, the tests that were asked, and basically there was a lot of pressure almost from the assessor to admit that she was addicted. And she says no, I'm not. I mean I made a mistake. It happens. I hardly have drunk in my life. I made one little mistake, and yet it's almost like you're treating me like I've been on drugs and liquor for the last 20 years of my life.

Ms. McIntyre: — Actually what happens in that, I can give you the statistics on that one. We screen . . . There are just under 4,000 people annually who have been convicted of an offence that would result in them having to go through addiction screening to get their driver's licence back; 75 to 78 per cent of those are screened to education within the first two visits. The other 20, 25 per cent go through the recovery program. So the vast majority of the people who go through addiction screening are screened and attend the weekend driving without impairment program, and then after they've been suspended for three months are eligible for a restricted licence.

Mr. Brkich: — Yes, and I believe she was. But she just found it very, very intimidating. There seemed to be a lot of pressure on her to admit that she had a problem, which probably that's the way they're trained because most of the people that they actually deal with, that don't deal with . . . that are sent from you, that come in voluntarily with a drug problem, that's the first thing you have to admit is that you have a drug problem, so that they're kind of trained maybe in a different way to deal with drugs.

Then people are coming from SGI on, like, say the 80 per cent eventually go just to the driver education end of it. But for that first two sessions, they find it very, very gruelling on some of the sessions. Maybe they're not all like that, and probably some of the addiction counsellors are different. Some will maybe take different approaches on how they approach a particular one. So that's why I was asking along the guidelines. Do you have any kind of guidelines, or are you just letting them set it? Or have you asked . . . I would ask for a set of written guidelines that they actually use from each assessor so that they have a set of guidelines for clients that come from you.

Ms. McIntyre: — We have a whole binder full of guidelines

that they abide by. They are the health guidelines. But I guess what I would suggest, if your constituent has a concern with a particular addiction screener, they can contact our office. And we have a strong partnership with health, and we have worked through other concerns. It sounds like you have an individual addiction screener that was maybe a little overzealous, and we can certainly work with our partners to resolve that situation.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for that. Yes, I'll pass that on to her because I think she might be interested in making a . . . (inaudible) . . . so she can contact you and just express her concern over that.

With that, I'll pass it on to one of my other colleagues that may have some questions along this line.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. That'll teach me to let somebody else in when I'm still asking questions.

On the same issue, I wonder if you could check and see just what percentage of people have to provide medical testing — not histories, but testing — on their first time that they're assessed. I would almost think that you would do the SASSI testing first and then, relative to the results you've got out of that, then make a determination whether or not medical testing was a valid point after that occurrence.

Your comment that SGI doesn't require medical testing yet if the assessor asks for it and you refuse then you're no longer have the privilege to drive because you haven't completed all of the tests that the assessor has requested. It seems to me that that's an avoidance of the responsibility by SGI in saying well we don't require it. If the assessor asks for it and you refuse, we're not going to give you a licence.

So it would seem to me that SGI is then saying we do require it in that particular case, you know. And I think that it would help maybe if it was clarified both for the assessors and for the SGI clients that are facing this situation.

Ms. McIntyre: — Mr. Chairman, I may have not worded it quite properly. I guess what we're saying is we don't have a direct requirement for any testing prior to them going to the addiction screening.

Again, with the addiction screening, we adhere and have adopted the protocols that were recommended to us by the health professionals that are experts in that field. Addiction screening is not something that insurance workers are very knowledgeable in. But we do . . . I take your point. We do work with them on the protocols, and we do have a binder of procedures.

And I will get you the percentage of people who have provided medical test . . . have had to provide medical testing information prior to their first visit.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Or perhaps as a result of their first visit as well, because they may not have . . . Nobody would likely have told them prior to the first visit other than a letter, which would be their first visit, that they needed the medical testing.

I'm wondering, once a person has gone before the courts and

has been convicted of an impaired driving — .08 — what's the length of time from that point of court order to the point of assessment by a medical professional?

Ms. McIntyre: — Actually we have addiction screeners throughout the province. When you've got the .08, you have to walk for at least three months. And we have had no problems whatsoever getting — that we're aware of, that customers have brought to our attention — of anybody getting in to get their assessment done within that 90 days.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, that was my concern, was . . . were they getting in within that time frame, or was something else happening. The 90-day automatic suspension upon conviction, the court may have ordered or . . . okay, let me step back. The 90-day suspension, is that prior to conviction or after conviction?

Ms. McIntyre: — The 90-day administrative suspension . . . there's two 90 days here we're talking about. The 90-day administrative suspension is essentially a roadside. They get a 24-hour suspension because of course they can't drive at that point. They get a seven-day driving permit — seven days to get their affairs in order — and then they have a 90-day administrative driver licence suspension. But they are not convicted yet.

Once convicted, if it's your first offence you have to serve a minimum of 90 days suspended. And that's when you have time to get your addiction screening done, do your education, or do your recovery. So the vast majority of our people, except the severely addicted, have completed all of their programs within the 90 days and are eligible and receive their restricted licence at the end of that 90 days.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The 90-day original pre-conviction, is it counted as part of the penalty once an administrative penalty is assessed after conviction?

Ms. McIntyre: — No it is not. They may get to court . . . for example, if you get to court on the 50th day, then the rest of your 90 days is served congruent. So it's not added to your year or your other 90 days, whatever it may be. But it is not part of after you're convicted.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So the two 90-day periods could run concurrently for some portion thereof?

Ms. McIntyre: — Correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Does this also apply for .04 warnings?

Ms. McIntyre: — The 90-day administrative suspension? No. It depends with the .04 . . . I mean it can if it's a multiple conviction. If you're an experienced driver, which means you've been driving more than two years, your first .04 is just a 24-hour suspension. Your second .04 is a 24-hour suspension, and you have to go through addictions screening. Your third one is a 24-hour suspension, addictions screening again, and a 90-day suspension from driving. If you're a new driver, of course, you have a zero BAC, and we get you right away because we're trying to teach you something.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Yes, and I actually support that point. In fact I was a part of the safe driving committee that asked that that be implemented.

On the streaming that you provide for someone who is convicted, you mentioned education is one stream, addiction treatment is the second stream, and now you're talking about a middle stream. What would that stream provide? Would it be a combination of education and treatment, or how would you describe that and value it?

Ms. McIntyre: — We're just working on that right now. We're working with the health professionals on it. Manitoba has a program that we're looking at, and it is a combination of a program that we've come up with that the customers would pay for, and it is exactly as you detailed it. It would be a portion of education, but it would be a little more of the hard-hitting education, and it would be portion of the recovery programs, but not to the extent of somebody that we believe is a very habitual or has the alcoholism disease.

The Chair: — I recognize Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think we'd like to move on in the remaining time to another area of this particular piece of legislation. It has to do with the registration of IRP vehicles and the establishment of a place of business. For the record, the IRP stands for international registration plan, of which Saskatchewan is a participant along with the other jurisdictions throughout North America. And it really, as I understand it, allows interprovincial or international trucking companies to register in a home jurisdiction, but for the fees they pay to the home jurisdiction, the monies are shared with the other areas through which the trucks run. Is that correct, that understanding correct?

One of the things that is addressed in this particular piece of legislation is the clause, an established place of business. And reading from the proposed legislation, it defines that as “. . . a place of business that meets the prescribed criteria.” What I need to know today is what are the prescribed criteria?

Ms. McIntyre: — Basically I mean we're probably jointly on this, but the prescribed criteria that we're going to be articulating in this, is basically that they really have to have some of the key elements. They have to have an office that's really an office. They have to have at least an employee here. They have to keep all of their records here because under the National Safety Code you're supposed to have all of your records here.

So primarily we're going to be prescribing in those regulations that they have a legitimate business here. Again this is — I referred to in the other Act — is we do have carriers who come here and they basically paying somebody to have a telephone with an answering message in their basement, saying that that's their place of business so that they can base plate in Saskatchewan to get the low rates. Then what's happening is they're having claims all over North America. We're paying them, and it's contributing to us, you know, may having to raise rates at some point.

So we welcome business to this province, and we want to

encourage legitimate business to come here and operate here and employ good Saskatchewan people, but we don't want to have these false fronts and have to deal with them, and then we as Saskatchewan motorists are paying for their claims.

Mr. Elhard: — If you're about to prescribe the criteria, as you delineated just a moment ago, what is the existing situation? What criteria are in place now that is problematic?

Mr. Kush: — There are some base requirements in the international registration plan agreement itself. However because most jurisdictions don't have compulsory insurance like Saskatchewan does, it's not quite in-depth enough for us to determine who should be Saskatchewan plated and who should not be. So again the proposed legislation and regulations would try to fine tune that a bit.

Mr. Elhard: — With the introduction of this legislation and with the regulations that will go with it establishing prescribed criteria, I'm not sure that it will probably address some confusion going forward, but there's some companies in no man's land right now who are having a terrible time.

The minister will be aware of a case that was brought to his attention — just the last day or so — of a company that is trying to operate in Saskatchewan, but cannot find out what the requirements are that they're being expected to fulfill. And as a consequence, the frustration level has grown to the point where this particular company is about to fold because they can't get a clear answer.

And I'm wondering, given the legislation here and the determination and the interest in providing specific prescribed criteria, whether we could say to this individual that, because new regulations are coming and the regulations will be very clear, we're not going to put you out of business. We're going to let you operate for a time until we know exactly what's going on here. Am I asking for something that's unreasonable?

Mr. Fogg: — Mr. Chairman, I don't know the circumstances of this particular case, but I do know that we have many situations — or some situations at least — where companies have come into Saskatchewan, the vehicles, the trucks may never, ever be in Saskatchewan at any point. They have no place of business, and they are operating from a hotel room, and we are paying the claims on these trucks that are running through North America. So it is a problem.

And Saskatchewan is the only jurisdiction in North America that would provide for this type of insurance on trucking fleets. Even Manitoba doesn't provide it at all. We're the only one that does because we want to protect legitimate Saskatchewan-based trucking fleets. But we can't afford to insure companies that travel up and down the East Coast of the country, never come into Saskatchewan, and simply set up a hotel room with a telephone in it.

And that's what we're seeing. And we're seeing, for whatever reasons, these companies are having tough times getting insurance in other provinces, and so they gravitate here. And this legislation, we believe, will protect legitimate Saskatchewan-based trucking fleets and keep their rates as low as possible.

Mr. Elhard: — I appreciate your interest in protecting the industry that abides by the law and the interest in trying to protect SGI against, you know, fraudulent abuse. I guess what I'm concerned about at this particular juncture is it seems that SGI has recognized the difficulties of this type of abuse and what it's doing. But we've got some legitimate upstart businesses that are caught in kind of a no man's land because nobody seems prepared or able to give them a clearly defined set of criteria by which they have to operate.

And I think that I don't . . . I've met with this particular individual. They've brought their case to us, and they've said, if this can't be resolved we're going to be out of business within days. And I don't want to see that happen. So I guess because there seems to be some uncertainty there, but we're going to clarify those regulations which would make it clear for this individual as soon as the legislation's passed. Let's not lose him and his initiative and his job-creating initiative because we haven't been able to clarify that situation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Just generally just let me respond without going into sort of specifics for the individual just because he may not be interested in sort of having this as public information.

But just generally, I've looked into the circumstance into this particular case when your colleague spoke to me, and it would . . . I think it would have been SGI's view that he had been provided with the information. But having said that, I asked and it was subsequently . . . all of the information that they require was subsequently provided to the individual the next morning I believe. So hopefully it's been sorted through.

But let me say generally in addition to that, I've also asked that this issue be addressed in terms of the very point that you make, that we need to ensure that legitimate businesses aren't unfairly impeded from . . . or road blocks aren't put up to ensure . . . And in some ways this legislation, this amendment I hope deals with that very, very point.

Mr. Elhard: — I think that that's the type of assurance we want. I don't have any problem with the changes, the more rigorous definitions that are provided to address these areas of . . . maybe uncertainty if I can use that term loosely. Because I think it's important that people who operate or want to operate in Saskatchewan do so legitimately, but that we don't lose any potential business to the province because of the kind of grey area that we're dealing with right now.

I think the issues that we wanted to raise in respect to this particular piece of legislation have largely been dealt with to this point and, Mr. Chairman, we have no further questions.

The Chair: — Thank you members. Clause 1, short title. Is clause 1 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That's carried.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 26 inclusive agreed to.

The Chair: — Therefore Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: Bill No. 48, An Act to amend The Vehicle Administration Act.

And I would request a member to move that the committee report the Bill without amendment. That's Mr. Iwanchuk. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

Bill No. 29 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2004

Clause 1

The Chair: — The next item before the committee is Bill No. 29, The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2004. And I see the minister has no new officials, so therefore clause 1, short title? I recognize Mr. Weekes.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon to the minister and your officials.

Just some general questions first. What is the overall intent of the amendments to this Bill, No. 29?

Ms. McIntyre: — With The Snowmobile Act, the intent we have here is actually it's a lot of sort of cleanup and cleaning up things that we found as we've gone through it. We're moving a couple of Highway Traffic Board orders that have been on the books for a number of years into the Act because we feel that that makes them more accessible to the public.

We're again clarifying that, you know, you don't have to register your vehicle or have a driver's licence if you're just crossing public roads by the most direct route. However the most direct route may not be directly across . . . you know, going from one approach to the other in a field.

We're clarifying it was a cleanup on . . . Right now in the legislation, if you're between 12 and 15 and you have a safety course, snowmobile safety course . . . but of course don't have your driver's licence when you're 12 to 15. And if you turn 16 or 17 and you still don't have your driver's licence but have taken the snowmobile safety course, you still . . . the way the legislation was written, you wouldn't be able to drive it any more. So we're cleaning up sort of some of things that we'd missed a few years ago.

We want to make sure that, if you're a learner driver and you're driving a snowmobile on a public road, that you are accompanied by a qualified driver just like if you were driving a vehicle on the road. We're implementing requiring safety courses. Now anyone from 12 to 15 who wants to drive a snowmobile needs to have a safety course. We feel that that would be beneficial for all. So starting with those born January 1, '89, and forward will be required to have a safety course, which we think is very valuable.

And then just a request from the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to make sure that they can issue a trail map only once a year to save them money and hassle, but to enable law enforcement to enforce on new trails that are built each year, even though it's only gazetted and the map produced once a year, as long as those trails are marked.

So we have a lot of good cleanup and safety issues in this Act that we're asking for approval.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Just a few questions. The first topic really that comes to mind is around the registration of snowmobiles, is there a difference in legislation . . . My point is getting to a person that's been suspended for having a .08 or any other infraction, that does not have a driver's license. How does that relate to the use of a snowmobile and crossing public highways?

Ms. McIntyre: — Well you only need a driver's licence to drive a snowmobile if it is both registered and you're going to drive it on public roads. So if you're suspended because of a .08 and you're working in this quarter section and you have to cross to your other quarter section every day with the bales for the cows, you can do that even if that means that you have to go down a quarter of a mile down the road to get to the approach because you're taking the most direct route there.

So if you'd been suspended from driving a vehicle, you cannot drive your snowmobile on public roads unless you're only crossing them by the most direct route to get from private land to private land.

Mr. Weekes: — Does that apply to trails as well?

Ms. McIntyre: — It applies to the public trails for sure, but not to the Crown land. Isn't that correct?

Okay. We just conferred, and we've agreed that it does not apply to the trails or the Crown land.

Mr. Weekes: — Does not.

Ms. McIntyre: — Does not. But we can verify that for you.

Mr. Weekes: — What you're saying . . . if a person's license is suspended, they cannot ride on one of the trails, designated trails.

Ms. McIntyre: — We'll have to double-check that for you.

Mr. Weekes: — I'd like to go to the area of trail permits. Could you explain that in more detail about the trail permits and who issues them and what is the amount of the permit?

Mr. Kush: — In 1999, legislation was enacted to provide for an ongoing funding mechanism for snowmobile trails in the province, the trail managers appointed through that legislation now being the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association. The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association basically designates the trails, produces the trail permits, sets the fees.

And again, anyone who is driving on a designated trail on private land or on a highway or highway right-of-way requires a

designated permit or a trail permit, rather.

Mr. Weekes: — You said the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association designates that.

Mr. Kush: — Yes. Yes, the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association designates which trails require a trail permit.

Mr. Weekes: — The amount of the permit, is that a standard amount, or is that, that's again up to the SSA (Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association)?

Mr. Kush: — Yes, the Snowmobile Association sets the permit fees.

Mr. Weekes: — Is there any guidelines around what is being charged?

Mr. Kush: — The current legislation leaves that completely up to the trail manager.

Mr. Weekes: — Now I understand, well, the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association of course uses that money for their trail fund which provides dollars to maintain the safe snowmobile trails. They have said in the last five years, they have mentioned in this letter, that the RCMP haven't been really enforcing the permitting, and they've been short of funds. They feel that with these amendments that the RCMP will be enforcing the purchase of permits. And could you just comment on that situation?

Mr. Fogg: — The RCMP could have enforced the law on any of the trails that had been gazetted, which was the vast majority of the trails. The only ones they could not have is ones that weren't gazetted. So they always could have enforced the law. It's a decision by the RCMP, I suppose, of where they want to put their resources and how much of their resources they want to allocate to checking snowmobile permits.

Mr. Weekes: — The SSA, in their letter, is relying heavily on added enforcement. Now it's just interesting with the RCMP and all police forces that they have limited resources as you had mentioned. They have priorities, and so it's just an interesting comment from them, that they hope that this is going to bring in more revenue because of added enforcement. Of course the association needs the added revenue to look after the funds.

Just a question around the regulations and the right of the snowmobile association, the concern has come to us — and I'm sure it has come to the government — about the clubs or club in the northern administrative district. They certainly have grave concerns about this. They have stated that their situation is completely different from the southern trails.

You know, this is their way of life. This is in many cases . . . the only means of transportation in the winter is on these trails, and they are asking to be exempt from the permit process. Could you just elaborate on that situation and what . . .

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Sure. First of all thanks very much for providing us with that information. I received that information yesterday actually in my office and read through it. Here's the way I think we would view the circumstance.

First of all, as was identified, the Act currently allows for the trail manager, which is the snowmobile association — Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association in this particular case — to set the trail permits and in fact to exempt any area or snowmobile club. So within the Act that's being proposed, this exemption could take place. They have also been . . . the snowmobile association has also been contacted by SGI regarding this very situation. And the snowmobile association has indicated that they'd be willing to meet with the La Ronge club and discuss this particular situation.

Mr. Weekes: — Well it's interesting in your Bill, it . . . I'll read it, and the explanation provides a registration exemption for commercial fishermen and trappers in the northern administration district. Now that's for the registration. Why would the purchase of permits not be also in the legislation to exempt the northern administration district? It seems it would not be fair to the people in the North, considering their traditional situation as far as their environment and the economics and the role that Saskatchewan has given the North that they would have to rely on, well basically the whims of an association rather than having it in statute.

Ms. McIntyre: — I guess the history behind the exemption that we're placing in the Act was . . . back in '94, it was brought to the attention of the Highway Traffic Board that there was a number of trappers and commercial fishermen who did not have the language to . . . were not competent enough in the English language to get a driver's license and didn't need a driver's license because of where they lived and what they did. So they came up with what they could do . . . is exempt these trappers and commercial fishermen from having to register their snowmobile which then meant that they didn't have to have a driver's license.

So we sort of have a domino effect here. It's been very effective. We want to make sure that it's in the public domain, so we're moving it into the legislation. It's to accommodate them. Our understanding from our information on this is there's becoming fewer and fewer of these because the young people that are going into that business are, of course with some of the northern roads, are wanting to have their driver's licence, are getting a driver's licence, and are registering their snowmobiles as well in that business because they're operating them more as a business.

But this is still something that we still need to accommodate for a number of years, and so that's why it's specifically for those individuals, rather than the whole district. But it applies to that northern administration district.

Mr. Weekes: — And that's the point about why they should be . . . they may fall under the regulation of having to buy a trail permit. I mean that's their point that I'm making on their behalf, that they don't . . . I don't believe they see any difference between being exempt from registering their snowmobile and having a licence and purchasing the trail permit. They feel that the same rule should apply.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I guess I would just want to have it on the record that I . . . I mean I would ask, as a minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, to be sensitive to the circumstances that you describe where there

would be individuals who, as an example have, I suppose, you know travelled that route for sort of 30 years to get home, that they would be sensitive to that circumstance and use some reason. I mean I guess I have reason to believe that the association would be sensitive to that.

Having said that, I think it's also fair to say — because I'm aware we'll get to that clause specifically fairly soon, but I might as well say it now while I'm speaking about it — I think that we would continue to monitor this. And if it is apparent that this becomes an issue that has not been able to resolved between the individuals affected in the northern administration district and the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, I think we would want to re-examine that circumstance.

Mr. Weekes: — Well I appreciate that. I'll go back to the issue of enforcement we discussed that somewhat. The snowmobile association believes that with that enforcement by the RCMP, the revenue is going to come in, and that may happen. And if that's the rules and regulations, so be it. They have a worthy, worthy point as far as looking after the trails, and they obviously need funding. They've also added in the letter that I have here, asking for additional funding from the government, but that's another issue.

Now one has to wonder though, if a club is not a member of the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, where do they . . . if they're not a member, then the association doesn't have any jurisdiction over that club or that group of people, and they would not necessarily be obligated to buy a permit, a trail permit.

Mr. Kush: — I believe there are situations like that where there might be clubs in Saskatchewan — not too many — but who design and groom their own trails. However if they're not affiliated with the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association, the trail does not become designated within that map, and no, no one has to buy a permit for that particular trail in question.

Mr. Weekes: — That leads me to another item as far as insurance and liability. I know the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association wants to discuss that further. Could you just give us a bit of an explanation of where the liability and insurance situation lies with these trails and the associations and individual owners and riders of these trails?

Mr. Fogg: — As I recall, the legislation requires the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to purchase \$3 million in liability insurance, and they can buy that liability insurance from any private sector insurer, including SGI CANADA. They have chosen to purchase from SGI CANADA. I believe SGI CANADA's rates are probably the lowest. They're still high. And the cost of liability insurance for this type of business is high right across Canada.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you. Just a comment on what was explained as far as the northern administrative district and the exemption that those groups up there were wanting from having to buy or purchase a trail permit.

I would just like to put on record that you have said that you will look into this matter and also have discussions with the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association about their approach to

the northern administrative district. And I'd certainly like to give you the opportunity to work this out with all the groups in Saskatchewan and including any other disputes that may come up in the southern areas, but in particular the northern administrative district. And we would like to revisit this in a year's time or possibly in the fall sitting and see how this is coming along. Will the minister commit to that?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I think I've done that already on the record. Certainly we said that we would review this again within a year or so and just to make sure that this is not problematic.

We would want to give time . . . You asked about the fall sitting, but I don't think we'd know by this fall yet. I don't think the snow is going to come that soon. We wouldn't know this fall yet whether or not it's working.

A Member: — Coming early.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — And somebody says it's coming early. They know more than I do. But having said that, I would commit that we would review this again within a year to see whether it's working or not.

Mr. Weekes: — Just one more point, would the minister commit to bringing in an amendment if this is not resolved at the association level?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I'd want to see what the specific amendment was. But if you're suggesting it would be similar to this amendment, again I'd want to review what the particular circumstances were around it before I would absolutely commit to do that right here today.

But if it isn't working, I think — not just myself as the minister or any minister who might be responsible at the time, the government of the day — I think we would want to ensure that this is working properly for the individuals in the North. And having said what I've already said, I think we do acknowledge some of the unique circumstances that do exist primarily in the northern administration district.

So to commit that we would bring in this specific amendment, I don't think I'm ready to do that today. But I will put it on the record that we would give very, very serious consideration to some changes if it isn't working.

Mr. Weekes: — Well thank you. Certainly we'll be in touch with all the stakeholders in this, and we'll revisit that in the future if need be. Thank you very much. No more further questions.

The Chair: — Mr. Elhard.

Mr. Elhard: — We're probably only going to have a couple of moments after my comments to take a vote on this. So before we leave, I would just like to thank the minister and his officials for being as forthcoming as they have been with us today and appreciate the depth of the answers and the specifics. And we'll look forward to additional meetings in the future.

The Chair: — Clause 1, short title. Is clause 1 agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 7 inclusive agreed to.

The Chair: — Therefore Her Majesty by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enacts as follows: Bill No. 29, An Act to amend The Snowmobile Act.

And I would ask the member to move that the committee report the Bill without amendment. Mr. McCall.

Mr. McCall: — So moved.

The Chair: — So moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

The committee agreed to report the Bill.

The Chair: — It now being past the ... I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much. I just want to thank, very much, the officials for their very good answers. I really do, as the minister responsible, appreciate this new committee structure where you can have the officials who are very, very knowledgeable on the specifics being able to answer other than the old format. So it's really nice for a minister like myself as well to be able to do that, and I think it's better for the committee members generally. I also want to acknowledge the very good questions that were asked by the members here today as well. Thank you.

The Chair: — I would entertain a motion to adjourn. Moved by Mr. Elhard to adjourn. Is this agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. This committee stands adjourned until the call of the Chair.

The committee adjourned at 17:00.

