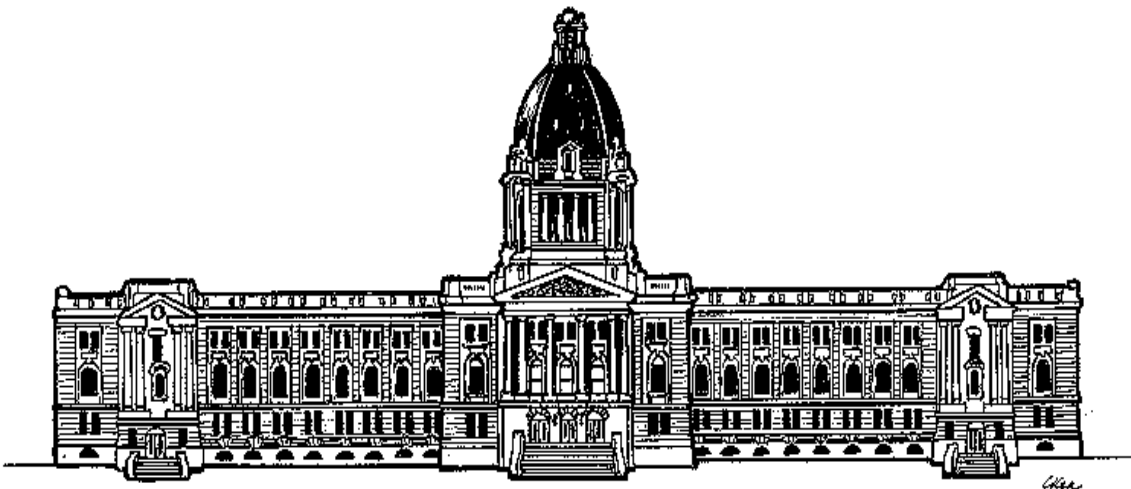




STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES

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**STANDING COMMITTEE ON CROWN AND CENTRAL AGENCIES
2006**

Ms. Sandra Morin, Chair
Regina Walsh Acres

Mr. Dan D'Autremont, Deputy Chair
Cannington

Hon. Graham Addley
Saskatoon Sutherland

Ms. Donna Harpauer
Humboldt

Mr. Allan Kerpan
Carrot River Valley

Hon. Mark Wartman
Regina Qu'Appelle Valley

Hon. Kevin Yates
Regina Dewdney

[The committee met at 15:00.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, everyone. The Bill before the committee today is The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2006, Bill No. 46. And perhaps we'll start off with the committee introducing themselves. Okay, start off with the opposition side, please.

Mr. McMorris: — I'm chitting in. My name is Don McMorris.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Dan D'Autremont, MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] for Cannington.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Rod Gantfoer, MLA Melfort.

Mr. Allchurch: — Denis Allchurch, MLA Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mark Wartman, MLA Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Kevin Yates, MLA Regina Dewdney.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Graham Addley, MLA Saskatoon Sutherland.

The Chair: — So it's my understanding today that we have Mr. McMorris chitting in for Ms. Harpauer. Is that correct? Okay. Thank you very much. Thank you.

So today we'll have Minister Serby appearing before us with your officials. Would you like to introduce your officials, Mr. Serby.

Bill. No. 46 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2006

Clause 1

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair, and to the members of the committee this afternoon. Seated to my immediate right is Mr. Al Syhlonyk. He is the executive director of policy and planning with our department, Regional Economic and Co-operative Development. To Mr. Syhlonyk's right is Elizabeth Flynn, who is the legislation adviser of SGI [Saskatchewan Government Insurance]. And to my immediate left is Anna Lapierre, who is the assistant vice-president of licensing and registration services of SGI. Those are my officials, Madam Chair, members of the committee.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Serby. Did you have any opening remarks that you'd like to make?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The committee has suggested that I should keep my remarks relatively tight, and so I will. I'll simply indicate that we're before the committee today to respond to the issues or questions that the committee might have in relationship to some of the changes that we've made, which really have been spurred by the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association in consultation with their 75 clubs or 74 clubs across the province. And so the legislation that's before us today is a reflection of the requests that were made of us by the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Serby. I should also mention this falls under the office of minister of Rural Revitalization, and that's why you're appearing before us today. So that leads us to Bill No. 46, The Snowmobile Amendment Act, clause 1. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you. I know that my colleagues on the opposite side of the House seem to be very anxious with this Bill, but we do have a few questions to ask.

I believe last year was the first year where SGI was a participant in the trail permits, that the fees were tied to SGI's insurance, where the \$40 that was collected went to the trail clubs and \$10 for the permit was for liability insurance. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Yes.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How many trail permits were sold last year using this avenue?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Last year we had sold . . . And I think when we responded to the written question that we received from members opposite, we listed the number 10,123. And that would have been to the end of February. Those would have been recorded numbers that came through our computerized system. Then there were, through that period, an additional number that had to be manually looked after, which brought our number to I believe 13,404 for the year that we're talking about here. That takes us to about February — which is the snowmobile season — of last year.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How do those numbers compare to SGI's registrations of a year earlier where the fee was only \$10 for a registration and insurance?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The numbers are down a little bit. And I'll give you the number, Mr. Member, through the Chair. The number is down by about 2,000, maybe a bit larger; 15,514 is the number that we had of the previous year. And those were permits that were sold through the snowmobile clubs throughout the province as opposed to the new process, which is the \$40 registration now versus a \$9 registration is what the previous year's registration cost was.

In the year 2004, it would be helpful, I think, for the members to also know that the registration fee of \$9 pro-rated generated about 42 or \$43,000. I don't have the exact number because we don't have the exact dollars from the period December to February in there. The December number was 38,000, and so we should add probably three or four additional thousand dollars on to that number to get to where we need to be.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That \$9 fee was for SGI's registration, was it not? That wasn't a trail permit.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And the 15,514 number was for SGI's registration numbers, not trail permits.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's correct.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So there was a significant drop once the fee increased up to include both the registration fee and the trail permit fee.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well there was certainly a reduction in the number of people who registered their snowmobiles. That's correct. And I wouldn't be quick to assume that the reason that that happened is because there has been a change in the registration fee alone. I think there are a couple of other things that one should take and give consideration to.

One is that last year we did have a shortened snowmobile season because of the amount of snow that we had across the province, and so there would have been fewer snowmobilers that would have taken advantage of the snowmobile season.

I think the other important piece here is to recognize that previously a snowmobile permit cost you \$60 and/or \$90. If you purchased a snowmobile permit before December 31, you paid \$60. If you purchased a snowmobile permit after the end of December, you paid \$90. So in reality what snowmobilers are getting today is they're getting a cheaper rate to use the trails than what they did under the old permitting system.

Mr. D'Autremont: — That's a cheaper rate for those who wish to use the trails, but a significant increase for those who do not use the trails but nevertheless wish to have their snowmobile registered and have liability insurance on it.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's correct. Based on the recommendations of the snowmobile association through extensive surveys that they did with their club members across the province, this is the changes that we're making today that respond to their needs. And it is now a universal cost that goes to all snowmobile registrants across the province, with the understanding that those dollars then would go, from the registration fees that are collected by SGI, directly then to the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association to do the work that's required on the trails.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Was any survey done with those who were not a member of snowmobile clubs and are currently not members of snowmobile clubs?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think if there was any discussion on that, I don't believe that there would have been any way that the snowmobile association could have done that other than maybe doing public advertising — which I believe they did some of that too — where they simply let people know that they were pursuing a different process in terms of achieving a different level of funding for their association. I think that might have been the only way they could have done that.

So if the question is, was there research done by the snowmobile association outside of the clubs, I can't answer that. I expect likely not, other than the snowmobile shows that they had across the province where they told people about the fact that they were doing this. And because there are snowmobile shows that are held all across the province, that kind of discussion was held.

Now one might assume that the only people who come to a snowmobile show are only those who snowmobile. And if

that's the case, then the answer would be that the only people they talked to are snowmobilers.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Minister, there's a difference though between snowmobilers who belong to snowmobile clubs and those who do not. And a considerable number of those who do not belong to snowmobile clubs will be people who utilize their snowmobiles in the pursuit of their employment or in their businesses; such as farmers and ranchers and trappers who utilize their snowmobile as a work implement, not as a means of entertainment.

I can certainly understand why the snowmobile clubs would be in favour of this as it gives them a ready source of income. But we have been contacted by a number of people who are not in the practice of using their snowmobiles only for entertainment purposes but rather use them for work purposes and, nevertheless, if they want to have their vehicles registered with SGI, are forced to pay for that trail fee.

Is it possible for someone to register their vehicle, their snowmobile, have it registered and have it insured with SGI without having to pay the trail fees?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — No. The answer would be no. Now I think, in response to your earlier points that you made, we anticipate or are suggesting here that through the snowmobile association that there are 35,000 snowmobiles today that are operable in the province.

Even in the year where we didn't have this policy in place, only 15,000 registered. So you already have snowmobiles that are, you know, that are being used in the province for all the things you describe, that never were registered. So, you know, I don't know how you correlate the notion that somehow by not having this particular policy in place today this would encourage more people in fact to register when in fact you already had better than 15 or 17, 20,000 snowmobiles in the province that weren't registered.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And that number is now up today. If your 35,000 number is accurate, you are now in a position of having 22,000 that are not registered. So the advent of this program seems to be if you're interested in having snowmobiles registered and liability insurance on them, it's heading in the wrong direction.

How much money was collected for the snowmobile clubs through the use of this registration mechanism?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — This year we collected on their behalf, \$480,000.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And I think you used the number previously of 70,000 or 60-some thousand . . . \$70,000 for the registrations collected previously.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The number for . . . And I forgot. I need to correct this number. The number for this year is 482,200. The number for the previous year is the one I think you were asking about. Right? And I think that number is 480,000. That's the trail permit fees. Is that the number you're asking?

Mr. D'Autremont: — The trail permit fees for the past year under the new system is 482,200.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's right.

Mr. D'Autremont: — And previous to last year, you had used the number for the year 2004-2005 I believe of 60-some to something like 71,000 for the registration fees.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — No, I said it was 38,000 to the end of December. And then if you were to look, if we were able to provide you with the additional two months — January, February — that number would probably take you to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 45 let's say, at the top end.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, 45,000. Is that the registration portion then for '05-06 or is that for '04-05?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — '04-05 is the 45.

Mr. D'Autremont: — In '04-05 do you have any information on how many snowmobiles paid their trail permit fees?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Yes. The permit fees . . . And this is the number I was giving you a minute ago, and I apologize for not hearing the question appropriately. The permit fees collected, \$480,000 in the year 2004-05.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So the trail permit fee numbers didn't change then. They stayed roughly the 480,000 each year?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — They changed only by about \$2,000.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay, thank you. Obviously with the decrease in the fees but the increased numbers kept them roughly the same.

The monies that are collected and paid to the snowmobile clubs for the trail fee portion, what is that money utilized for?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The money is utilized for a number of things. They would be insuring all of the trails in the province — liability insurance — along with some of their shelters that they have in the province. And that number would be about \$100,000 for \$3 million worth of liability for the trails and for their shelters and their snow machines and their groomers that they use. They would provide another \$10,000 to safety programs that they would do through the course of the year. Another \$10,000 would go towards tourism promotions.

And then of course there'll be an administrative cost here that's attached as well to run the snowmobile association's central administration. And then the balance of the dollars that are left then get distributed back to the snowmobile clubs across the province. And I believe that the allocations back to the snowmobile clubs are made on a formula that is based on the number of kilometres of trail they have. And that's where the money would go.

Mr. D'Autremont: — How much money of that 480,000 is utilized for administration?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I don't have that number in front of me

here but we'll get this for you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — The numbers that you gave us already are roughly \$120,000 worth of expenditures out of 480. So that leaves 360,000. That money is going for liability insurance, for groomers, for safety, for tourism. What's left for the clubs to pay for?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well what would be left for the clubs would be whatever the administration cost is. That would come out of the cost, and then the rest would be distributed then back to the snowmobile associations across the province. And I don't have that number with me.

I think it's important to know though that the formula that I'm providing for you, the expenditure list that I'm providing for you today, is not new to the way in which we've changed the structure for financing here. That process has been in place for some time. The Saskatchewan snowmobile associations make the determinations on their own about whether or not they think that the amount of administration dollars they're paying today to manage the club is satisfactory. And so they're really the authorities that determine whether or not they're paying sufficient, not enough, too much for the administrative costs.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well I guess what's changed last year and then this continuation of it is the fact that now anyone who wants to have their snowmobile registered is forced to pay this fee. So I think it's important that we know and understand what that money is being used for.

You've shown where 120,000 out of 480 is going. But if the groomers are being looked after by the \$10,000 or the portion of the 100,000 actually, liability, that you talked about, what is left for the individual clubs to pay for? What expenses are they incurring that the money that will be allocated to them is being utilized for? Or is this simply for them to have a clubhouse and a Christmas party?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think that would be an understatement in terms of what they use their dollars for. They would use their dollars for, as I mentioned earlier, outside the insurance, there's all sorts of signage that you'll see along the snowmobile trails that they put up and there's some cost to that. There is the actual cost that they would have to running the grooming machines because this stuff doesn't come cheap, I don't expect, given the cost of fuel today. I expect that the people who operate them are in fact volunteers.

But it's a fair question that the member asks, about what is left or what goes to the clubs. Under the new arrangement that we have today with the snowmobile association, is that they now need to provide us an audited annual statement. That audited annual statement will get tabled in the legislature here. This is part of the new conditions that we've applied to the distribution of the registration money to them. And so the accountability of the questions that you're asking today will have to come to this Assembly right here.

Mr. D'Autremont: — When will those audited statements be made available? Obviously last year this was in place. The fiscal year-end has passed. When will those reports be tabled?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — My officials advise me that the year-end for the snowmobile association is March 31. And so the way in which the normal filing of annual reports is required, I believe it's 90 days. So we should have this information before the end of June.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Well we'll look forward to seeing that.

I have a concern with new section 20.1. The Bill reads:

. . . no person shall operate a snowmobile on a designated trail situated on private land or on a highway right of way without a valid trail permit . . .

When it's on private land and the person who owns that land owns a snowmobile and they wish to travel from one side of their property to the other side of their property and cross that trail, do they have to have a valid trail permit to do so? Or is the right for the enjoyment of their own property being denied them because of the trail running through it?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — My interpretation of that would be that it would be their right, for sure, to cross across the trail. It's their property. They in fact have given the authority to the snowmobile association to put the trail through. So I absolutely would be . . . without any question the ability for the person to cross the trail.

I think you also asked the question, or I heard you ask the question when you were speaking to second reading — and this may be your next question — and that is that if it's 3 miles of trail that belongs to you, sir, and you decided not to register your snow machine, can you travel up and down that trail? Well of course you can travel up and down that trail. It's your property. It's your land, and you can for sure travel up and down it without any repercussion or cost to you.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So why doesn't it say in the Act then that on your own property you may utilize that trail without penalty or without the need for a valid trail permit?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Because the regulations will exempt the landowner. And you'll be seeing the regulations very soon.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Okay. I believe one of my colleagues has a couple of questions he'd like to ask.

The Chair: — Mr. Allchurch.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Minister, welcome to your officials. As you know, I am an avid snowmobiler. I have been for many, many years. I asked written questions to SGI, the Hon. Glenn Hage, regarding the snowmobile registrations and I went back from year 2001-2002 to present. And their figures differ from the numbers that you just gave me.

In the fiscal year 2001 which ended on April 28, there were 15,331 snowmobile registrations in force; 2002 there was 16,898; 2003, 15,500; 2005, 14,660. But yet in 2005, the fiscal year which is a new change to The Snowmobile Act, there was only 10,123 and that is as of April 28. So your numbers differ quite a bit from these ones.

If you look at this, the previous years there was an average of roughly 15-plus registrations. In 2005 it dropped down to 10,000. So that means there was a one-third drop simply because the snowmobile association added on their \$30 on to the licence. So, Mr. Minister, can you comment on that? Because there's one-third drop, is it because the snowmobile association \$30 was added on to it?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Madam Chair, to the member. I think I answered the question when I answered it for the member from Cannington saying that, for the period where the number 10,123 shows, that's the recorded information that came out of the computerized systems of SGI. Because of when we implemented the program, a number of entries were needed to be made manually and so the manual entries took us to the same period of time that you're speaking to, to the number 13,404.

When you asked the question about how many snowmobiles were registered in the calendar year, we provided you the number of how many were registered in the calendar year, which is 10,123. So it would not be accurate for you to say that it's dropped by a third. I responded to the member from Cannington indicating that the number has dropped but around 2,000 — just over 2,000.

Mr. Allchurch: — Okay. Thank you, Ms. Chair. Mr. Minister, in regarding the 10,123, and you say that there was 13,404, some of them — roughly 3,000 — were put in as manual. What do you mean by manual? Does it mean from April 28 past, into March? Or what do you mean by the manual?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That SGI has a computerized system with all of its agents across the province and when you go to register a vehicle and they register it — whether it's a snowmobile or a car or whatever it is, or a vehicle — it automatically counts it for you when you make the entry. SGI wasn't in a position when we rolled the program out to make the physical electronic entry, and so those registrations were manually written out and then submitted centrally. That's what I mean by a manual entry. Okay?

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. In regards to the changes to The Snowmobile Act, for my colleague from Melfort who lives on a snowmobile trail on the east side of the province, who gets snow all the time and has trails right in his backyard, he would not argue with this. Therefore myself, who lives on the west side of the province, who does not have access to a snowmobile trail within probably 100 miles, I do have a great difficulty with it. I'm an avid snowmobiler. I snowmobile lots. But the only thing I get when I put a licence on is I have liability insurance. I now also have to pay an extra \$30 to . . . privilege to ride on a snowmobile trail where I have no access to.

So for us to fight over here is not worth it. But you must understand that there are many people in the province of Saskatchewan that don't have access to snowmobile trails. And I believe this is why the numbers of the snowmobile registrations are down considerably, is because people are forced to buy or pay an extra \$30 on their snowmobile licence just to drive their snowmobile when they don't have access to a snowmobile trail. This here denies those people to snowmobile but pay for something they don't utilize.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well I first suggest that if you and the member from Melfort want to have a fight, that's okay.

But I do want to say this. If you live in a region of the province today or a year ago that didn't have any snow and you wanted to snowmobile, then you put your snowmobile on a trailer and you trailed it to where there is snow. And when you got there you paid a permit fee or a trail pass. And if you were an avid snowmobiler like you say you are, you would have paid \$60 if you were registered before the beginning of December, before the 31st. And if you chose not to snowmobile until after December 31, you paid \$90, and you trailered your snowmobile and paid the permit fee.

Now you have actually a discount. You can put that same snowmobile on your same trailer, take it to the same trail or trails — wherever you choose across the province — and rather than paying 60 or \$90, you're only paying \$40 now. So the truth is, is that you have a reduction in using the snowmobile trail.

Now your other point about the fact that if you choose to register your snowmobile, that money now will be going to those clubs where they have trails, that's absolutely true. And the argument and the position that the snowmobile associations across the province make is that snowmobile trails do a variety of different things. They provide for tremendous public safety. If you want to snowmobile on safe, groomed trails, this is it.

They're also of the view that . . . And I hold this perspective as well. In the Hudson Bay area, which is on the eastern side of the province, the community of Hudson Bay, I talked to a hotelier this past spring. They had 1,500 — 1,500 — room dates from the snowmobile industry in their little town. Now it's a destination community, and along the way of 250 or 200 miles or 160 miles, there are lots of other communities of which snowmobilers will stop for fuel.

They also say in the town of Hudson Bay that they sold 100,000 litres of fuel to snowmobilers alone. And that doesn't include all of the communities along the way.

Now this is big industry. Snowmobiling in Saskatchewan is big industry. The snowmobile association will tell you that they garner \$64 million. There are better than 1,200 people who are directly employed by the industry.

And so if the question is, is this a good investment to the Saskatchewan community, as an economic driver, it's fantastic. It's fantastic. Are there some parts of the province that will be disadvantaged by this? The truth is that there will be. There are some that will be disadvantaged because they do not have trails, they don't have snow. Where they don't have trails, they're disadvantaged. If they don't have snow, the argument remains the same.

Whether you have a registration fee or a trail permit, the truth is is that you pay less for a registration fee today than you do for a permit.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, if you look at the province where the snowmobile trails are, it's less than half the province that does not have snowmobile trails. So is it a deterrent to the

people in the province that have snowmobiles and have snowmobiled all their life that have no access to utilize these trails unless they want to take holidays and go to these areas? Yes.

So what you're doing is you're making people in the province pay for something they don't utilize. It's not saying they can't utilize it, but they have to pay for something they don't utilize. And what I'm saying is the biggest part of the province cannot utilize these trails.

For area up the east side where there are snowmobile trails, or any area where there is snowmobile trails, this is great. Everybody that snowmobiles will agree with you. It saves you money and it is really good. It's also good for the communities and the businesses.

But what I'm saying is, as an avid snowmobiler as I am myself, this is not good for me because I don't utilize the trails. And here I'm paying for something in the province that doesn't.

My final question and one of the reasons that the snowmobile club from Spiritwood got out of the snowmobile association was the fact that when we put up a snowmobile trail — and we have for many years and when it comes to putting up signs well we did our signing years and years ago — those same trails were being utilized by quads. Businesses were running rallies on them or whatever have you. We as a snowmobile club was still responsible for that trail because it is a snowmobile trail.

In this Act, is there something in the Act that gives the snowmobile association protection that they are not responsible for the trails that they have, that are under their jurisdiction, but yet are utilized by other people in the area?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — The answer, Madam Chair, to the member is that there is nothing in the Act to prohibit that. And I think this would be very difficult to do because the snowmobile trails really, in majority, are on private land. And so it would be very difficult I think to pass or to have, within legislation, enforcement of a trail which really is on many, many individuals' private property.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, when we went to SGI in Spiritwood and asked about this, they said, you are responsible for anybody that utilizes that trail whether it is winter or summer. It's 12 months of the year we were responsible.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I think that you would be responsible during the period of time of which the trails are being groomed, if they have snow on them. I can't imagine how you would be responsible for that trail when it's off-season, given that it's all on . . . well the majority, it's on private land.

Mr. Allchurch: — Mr. Minister, not all snowmobile trails are on private land. A lot of snowmobile trails, and a good many of them, are on public land, which is snowmobile . . . or right-of-ways on roads, for the simple reason a lot of private ownership land, they do not want snowmobiles on there simply because the risk of having quads on there later on in the year. Once a snowmobile trail goes up, the quads can run on that trail and the snowmobile association is responsible for them.

I understand, Mr. Minister, that this is more an SGI question and I will be checking with SGI in regards to this. But I know this for a fact because it came out of our SGI dealership.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — What we'll do, Madam Chair, is we'll get absolute clarification for the member on this to be sure that we understand it fully. And if there are enforcement mechanisms that need to be looked at here, then I guess we'll need to look at how we do that.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I appreciate it.

The Chair: — Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — One final question for the minister. Mr. Minister, when a snowmobile trail travels through a provincial park, who is responsible for the grooming of the trail in the provincial park? Is it the local club that is operating the trails, or does the provincial park look after the trail that passes through their property? And whose equipment is to be utilized in the grooming of the trail within the park?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — In the park it's the park's equipment, Mr. Member. And where it's outside the park it's done then by the snowmobile club that's responsible for the trail.

Mr. D'Autremont: — So a snowmobile club is not responsible for the trail in the park at all?

Hon. Mr. Serby: — That's how I understand it.

The Chair: — All right. Thank you very much, Mr. D'Autremont. And if there's no more questions, we will proceed to the vote.

So short title clause 1, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 9 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — So Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2006. Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Would someone like to . . . I'm sorry. Mr. Yates?

Hon. Mr. Yates: — I move we report the Bill without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. Thank you, Minister Serby, and your officials for answering all the questions. And that would . . . oh one moment please. Mr. D'Autremont.

Mr. D'Autremont: — I'd like to thank the minister and his officials for coming in today and answering our questions. And I look forward to the information from the annual reports.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. D'Autremont. So on behalf of the committee, thanks again for appearing before us today and answering everyone's questions.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — I too, Madam Chair, want to thank the members of the committee and look forward to providing the information that's left outstanding. And safe snowmobiling in the new seasons. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you and have a good afternoon. We will now move on to the next Bill. And we'll take a two-minute recess.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Bill No. 59 — The Education Amendment Act, 2006/ Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation

Clause 1

The Chair: — All right. Good afternoon to Minister Higgins and her officials. This afternoon we'll be considering Bill No. 59, The Education Amendment Act, 2006. We have a substitution for Mr. D'Autremont. We're welcoming Mr. Gantefoer to the committee this afternoon. And we'll start off with Minister Higgins perhaps introducing her officials.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the officials for attending this afternoon to give maybe some more detailed explanations of The Education Amendment Act, 2006. To my right is Larry Steeves, the associate deputy minister of Learning; to my immediate left is Lois Duffee, executive director, legislative services; and to her left is Edith Nagy, director of policy and integrated planning with the department.

So, Madam Chair, this Bill really does put in place four, I guess, changes establishing school community councils, updating some of the curriculum terminology, and it is amending the fiscal year dates for school divisions. And also there is a few necessary housekeeping changes related to the name change for the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. So with that I will just open it up for questions.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Higgins. I will assume that that's your opening statement as well. And, Mr. Gantefoer, would you like to start off clause 1?

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Chairman. And minister and officials, welcome here this afternoon.

Minister, there are a couple of areas that I want to talk specifically about — mostly about the school community councils and very briefly then on the calendar year changes. Minister, as I read the legislation I see there's sort of two major components into the appointment or election of this school community council. There's a minimum of five and no more than nine elected members, and the Act then also speaks about

appointed members. Could we break that down? And first of all would you outline how you see the process for schools electing the members, and is there going to be a guideline specifically between five and nine or is that left to the individual schools?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — First off, before I get the officials to give you a little more detailed information on the breakdown and where that discussion currently is, I just want to say that with the local accountability and partnership panel that put forward the recommendations, one of them was for the school community councils.

And I think with the larger school divisions, that was one of the concerns is that we maintain that local accountability and input from the communities because we do not want to lose that. We understand how important it is to the schools in the communities that they reside, and having parent and community involvement in the schools is important on many levels.

But getting to the question specifically that you asked, I will turn it over . . . Edith will do this response.

Ms. Nagy: — Okay. The first question about the five to nine elected members. Those elections will be completed at the school level; however, the policy will be established in regulations and then further policy at the school division level. And the elections must be advertised in advance of the actual election, and then the elections would take place at a public meeting.

In terms of the exact number, boards will establish policy on the exact number of members for each of the councils. And the appointed members include: one or two secondary students in schools that offer 10, 20, and 30 level credits, so secondary and K to 12 [kindergarten to grade 12] schools; two teachers, one of whom would be a principal; and the other appointed members would be determined through a collaborative process between the school community council members and the board of education and appointed by the board.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Can I just add one other thing for the member. I think in all of the discussions that I've been involved in, we would like to see the community councils, school community councils representative of the communities in which they are located. So that if there was First Nations or immigrant communities that are involved in the school that that would be a consideration also when we are looking at the school community councils.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. If I could just stay focused for a moment on the elected members, the five to nine members that are elected. And the officials mentioned that these are advertised positions, if you like. And then there's an election process that is conducted by . . . under regulations I guess, set out by the school division themselves.

Will there be any safeguards put into place so that a narrowly focused special interest group potentially would be safeguarded from hijacking the process, if you like, and potentially dominate an individual school that might not reflect the makeup of the school? Democracy is a wonderful institution but it also could be abused.

Ms. Nagy: — In order to participate in the elections you would need to be a parent of a student in the school or an elector in the community so . . . And if you are an elector in the community you would not participate in more than one election where your children do not attend the school. So that presents some safeguard around that piece.

Mr. Gantefer: — I guess there is some safeguard but it also creates a situation where . . . I recall in my past experience of being on school boards that we could have an annual general meeting where, if you actually sorted out the people with some kind of a vested interest — school board members, spouses of school board members, teachers, or other people employed by the division — you might get less than a handful of independent electors that actually would be in attendance at an annual general meeting of the school division.

Is there any concern about these school community council elections being very unrepresentative because of lack of interest?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I would say that that would always be something that would be a red flag, that would be watched as we go through the initial set-up and operation of the school community councils. But I would say that when we look at the school boards and the school associations, I would say the association and the parent groups and community groups that are actively involved in our schools currently, I think the interest generally is there.

Well first off I'm wondering why someone would want to hijack a school community council for a special interest group, but, I mean, who knows? The circumstance could arise at some point in time. But it's something that we would have to pay attention to.

I guess one of the things that I go back to is health boards, how there was the requirements for health boards to be elected — with some success but not as much success as we would have liked to have seen. And we saw changes in that direction.

I would believe by the interest that we have seen from the school associations and the parent advisory groups within the school system and across the province that that would manifest itself in interest in the school community councils. But it's something that's going to have to be monitored to see how successful it is and if that interest is truly there. I believe it is, and we've seen it evidenced in the groups that are interested in the school system at a variety of levels. I think it will be successful, but it's something that will have to be monitored.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Minister. On the appointed members, you indicated one to two students that are from the 10, 20, and 30 classes; two teachers, one of which would be the principal; and then other appointees. Is there a maximum as there is with the elected members, of nine elected members potentially? Is there a maximum number of appointees, or is that open-ended?

Ms. Nagy: — That would be determined at the board level.

Mr. Gantefer: — So in terms of the legislation, it's open-ended.

Ms. Nagy: — Yes, it is.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you. Minister, it wasn't completely clear to me — and in discussions with the school boards association, it didn't seem to be completely clear with them as well — in terms of the accountability of these new school councils. I think that envisaged in the legislation is a greater role for the school community councils than what used to be the role for local school boards in the rural areas or parent-teacher organizations in the urban centres, that this envisages a much more proactive and a group with more responsibilities for practically every aspect of the school's well-being and life. Is there a clear accountability outlined in terms of . . . Ultimately the boards are responsible for these programs. Is there a clear accountability line, if you like, between the school community councils and the board, or is the department somehow in this mix as well?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — We are envisioning the community councils as more of an advisory role to the boards themselves, but I will turn it over to Mr. Steeves to give you a more detailed answer.

Mr. Steeves: — I think there was some discussion at the outset what the relative roles and I think there was clearly an attempt from the department's point of view to place the role and responsibilities of the school community councils within the framework of the school division board of education structure. So that yes, there is potential I think for them to play a more active role — continuous improvement framework, development of a school plan, things like that — but that's within the context of reporting to the board of education. I think that there was very much an attempt from the department to be clear that this is part of the school division and that these entities reported to the board of education.

Mr. Gantefoer: — I understand that there is some work being done with the SSBA [Saskatchewan School Boards Association] in terms of guidelines being written up, and they are being helpful in terms of the development of the guidelines and a bit of a framework for the school community councils to operate within. Is the department supportive of that? And does that, you know, indicate pretty clearly that the boards are really the people with the ultimate responsibility for the welfare of the students in their division and that the school community councils indeed are expected to work within that general framework?

Mr. Steeves: — Indeed. And Edith can provide more specific detail here, but in fact in the development of the guidelines and the training package that will eventually go out to work with boards and potential school community councils there was an agreement, I think, that the most appropriate group to lead the development of this work was the SSBA. And in fact a contract was provided — work through the SSBA, led by the SSBA that we primarily funded. I think that they have funded some of that work on their own, but a good portion of that — maybe all of it, but I don't think all of it — has been funded by the department, I think very much feeling that it was an appropriate position for the SSBA to provide leadership in this regard since again the school community councils sat within the authority and framework of the division board of education.

But, Edith, in terms of specific numbers you might be able to provide us . . . in terms of contract that was . . .

Ms. Nagy: — Yes. We did contract with the school boards association to produce the handbook and we will be contracting with them to do the implementation. But they have also committed some of their own resources in kind and financial resources to the preparation of that work.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much. One final area in terms of the school community councils. There is envisaged the possibility at least of amalgamation of school community councils. And I suspect that that might be more appropriate to urban settings where there's a number of schools in a relatively small community if you like that may indeed choose that, in the betterment for their two or three schools, one council would best represent their needs and interests in this instance.

I believe the legislation allows for the minister to give approval for amalgamation of these school community councils. And I'm wondering that if these community councils indeed are part of the whole board organization, I'm wondering why the minister is required to give this permission instead of having the boards being authorized to do it on their own right.

Mr. Steeves: — This was a matter of some discussion and I think that in the end it was felt that within the new board structures it was important for that local voice to be represented in a meaningful and real way.

Those of us who have some rural background know the important role, I think, that district boards played within that context and I think a sense that as this matter was discussed, that it was important to do what was possible to ensure that that community and parent local voice was represented through the school community council, that that provision needed to be made where it really made sense within the context issue for school community councils to amalgamate into a larger grouping, but that this was not something that should be done easily.

And I think that frankly, based on my own experience, the potential for urban people, directors of education as I used to be that maybe administratively want to locate some of these together in a single unit, might be an issue. And I think that there was a sense that, a need to be sensitive to the need — occasion to do that but not to do that really quickly, but to make sure there was very thorough due diligence in this regard.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Well I can certainly tell you that . . .

The Chair: — The Chair recognizes . . . I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. D'Autremont. The Chair recognizes Mr. Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I beg leave of the committee to introduce guests.

The Chair: — Is it agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. Premier.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — I want to thank members of the committee for permitting me to interrupt to introduce a group of students who have joined us in the Assembly this afternoon.

Members and friends, these are 25 grade 6 students from St. Mark School in the constituency of Riversdale in the city of Saskatoon. And we want to welcome the students from St. Mark here to the legislature this afternoon. I think they have been on tour or will be on tour, and I'm looking forward to having a chance to meet with them a little bit later.

With the students this afternoon are two of their teachers, James Strasky and Jim Jasniuk, and a number of chaperones, Mr. Sproule, Ms. Plamondon, Mr. Hiebert, Mr. Cochrane, Mr. Janzen, Ms. Dyrland, Ms. Wensley, and Mr. Mohamed.

I'd ask all the members assembled to help me in welcoming these students from St. Mark School in Saskatoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

**Bill No. 59 — The Education Amendment Act, 2006/
Loi de 2006 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur l'éducation
(continued)**

Clause 1

The Chair: — Mr. Gantefer.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much. I was going to comment that if you want to have a successful mechanism to slow down the process of considering amalgamation, then just keep it within the department and by its very nature it'll slow it down.

I want to now move towards, briefly to the fiscal calendar year and the changes embodied there. I know that there is a staged switching over in two phases, or in one two-step phase if you like, and then the permanent arrangement will be September 1 to August 31. Can you give me the background as to why that was chosen? Or would it have been . . . The question is really July 1, June 30 I guess would have been the other date that would seem logical. And I just wanted to know what the department's thinking were for picking this particular date.

Mr. Steeves: — And it was the original sense of this issue that July 1 to June 30 would make the most sense. That was originally proposed by SASBO [Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials] as a group, the executive of SASBO in discussions. As a number of secretary-treasurers and boards began to look at the implications, there were some, I think, issues surrounding the transition to the year that led SASBO to revisit their original recommendation to move to the September 1 to August 31.

My understanding was that it related to the handling of some of the financial statements surrounding year-end and that it created the potential if it was left at July 1, June 30 to some potential accounting liabilities that would show up in ways that wouldn't occur if it was September 1 to August 31. So we attempted to accommodate the request of the school divisions in that regard

and move to the proposal that's provided here.

Pros and cons on this . . . And I know that the downside is that there's a few school days that typically occur before September 1 that will be carried into the previous fiscal year, a disadvantage I think we felt too.

But there was a strong feeling, as secretary-treasurers looked at this, that it was going to create some short-term, one-time liabilities that they thought would be difficult to manage. And so this was an attempt to recognize the concerns that that community raised, and the directors and boards with them.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you very much. You know, I appreciate the argument. But it would seem to me that since there were two transition dates that sort of led into the permanent situation, that it might have been able to have been accomplished in that way to give the time that was required and then go to something that was actually logical following the June 30, July 1.

But I realize it's in the legislation now. And if they're willing to live with it because of the, you know, few days . . . And quite typically, you have the schools starting over the province before the end of August and that gets to be a little bit cumbersome. I don't know of any schools that are operating after July 1.

So that seemed to be a logical, cleaner date. And I understand the issues of transition. But that's sort of not a showstopper. And I'm sure that if they're, if it's shown in the future that this is cumbersome, further amendments can be made if it becomes really problematic.

I'm wondering on this transition, you're hearing reported more and more that in school divisions trying to bring together the financial reports from these previous divisions, if you like, and most recently, a report out of Yorkton area where they're discovering some pretty significant liabilities that they don't quite understand and have to report them and record them and bring them forward into these new divisions.

Is the department finding a good number of these kinds of instances? Or is the department not aware of these instances yet?

Mr. Steeves: — I think that we're in the process and boards are in the process of working this thing through.

Just to step back, as a part of the transition process where individual school divisions, the new school divisions requested some additional financial transition support, as part of the transition funding package to see secretary-treasurers who had been working in individual school divisions where they thought there was some work, to bring it in, that where those requests were made that those were recognized as part of their transition funding. Because I think everyone felt it was very important that the support to bring those statements together would be useful and helpful.

At this point we haven't been made aware of very many problematic situations. Frankly we anticipate there may be some, but the suggestions at this point are that there are not very many. But again, I think boards are in the process of bringing

those informations together right now. And we're working with them as we speak, actually, to gain a better idea of the picture that's out there. But not very many to date, that we're aware of anyway.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much, Madam Chair. That's the questions I have on this piece of legislation. I recognize the rest of the clauses are largely housekeeping, and I would like to thank the minister and officials for their answers.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Gantefoer, appreciate the questions. And thank you to Minister Higgins and the officials for answering the questions so well.

So as we're dealing with Bill No. 59, The Education Amendment Act, 2006, clause 1 short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 36 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Thank you. Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Education Amendment Act, 2006. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Can I have someone move this without amendment?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I will move it without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Wartman. And thank you, Minister Higgins and the officials, for answering all the questions diligently this afternoon and appearing before the committee.

Bill No. 44 — The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006

Clause 1

The Chair: — I'm sorry, you're not finished yet. Moving on to Bill No. 44, The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006. Again with Minister Higgins and the officials appearing before the committee. Mr. Gantefoer.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you very much. I'm getting a little nervous, Madam Chair. In speaking to teachers and school board officials and directors of education, it's been a common theme that this legislation is really housekeeping in nature and brings the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation legislation sort of into a current context, that I understand that the original legislation was 1935, and there's been some add-ons and amendments but nothing has really sort of brought everything together in the modern terminology.

It's also said to me by these stakeholders that they believe in their discussions with the department that this legislation is not intended in any way to change the overall mandate, the responsibilities, and the powers of the teachers' federation but

just to modernize and update it. And if they have any concerns or fears in this regard, I would like to ask the question to just verify that indeed that this legislation just modernizes, just updates, and in no way increases or expands or changes the mandate of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — The member may be well aware that what this Bill does is it really repeals the old Act and replaces it with an updated version. Really what it does is define the authorities and the responsibilities of the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation in more contemporary and specific language than the current Act. Much of the language in the current Act is archaic and too general in some instances and too specific in others. So what this Bill does is modernize and clarify the Act.

This Bill is a result of consultations between the Government of Saskatchewan and the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation. And the STF [Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation] has also undertaken consultations with the Saskatchewan School Boards Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, and the Saskatchewan association of school board officials. And there is agreement by all parties, including the Department of Learning, the Department of Justice, and the STF about the appropriateness of the provisions within the Bill and that it does not change policy, just updates and modernize. And it makes the Act more appropriate to what the STF actually does.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Madam Minister. That certainly is our interpretation of the legislation, and we are very supportive of the initiative. I understand that the STF actually started this process in 1999 or so, and it's been ongoing this last six or seven years. And there indeed has been a tremendous amount of consultation and general consensus and agreement that this is important and valuable, and we certainly support that. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Gantefoer. So The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006, clause 1 short title, is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

The Chair: — Thank you.

[Clauses 2 to 48 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Thank you. Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Teachers' Federation Act, 2006. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. So now I can say thank you very much, Minister Higgins and your officials. And did you have any final remarks that you'd like to make?

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I just wanted to thank the officials for being here today too and for the work that they have done on these two pieces of legislation.

But I'd also like to thank the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation for the work they've put into updating the Act and having the consultations done for the new Act to more accurately represent the role that they play in providing service to their membership and, in fact, to the province of Saskatchewan. So thank you.

The Chair: — Thank you. I'd like to now invite Minister Addley to move this Bill without amendment.

Hon. Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd move that the committee report the Bill without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Addley. And once again thank you to the committee and the officials for appearing here today.

Bill No. 42 — The Respiratory Therapists Act

Clause 1

The Chair: — Good afternoon, Minister Taylor, and your officials. Today we're dealing with Bill No. 42, The Respiratory Therapists Act. And perhaps, Minister Taylor, you would like to introduce your officials.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to introduce the officials on this Bill. I have, directly to my right, Lauren Donnelly, the assistant deputy minister. Immediately to my left, Dorothea Warren, director, policy and planning branch. And to her left, Ron Knaus, director, workforce planning branch.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Did you have any opening remarks that you'd like to make, Minister Taylor?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — No. I'm quite prepared to move directly into questions.

The Chair: — Thank you. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Well I'll be glad to entertain them with questions then. I don't have a lot on these Bills but I do have some, and the first one on The Respiratory Therapists Act. The legislation is mainly driven by the respiratory therapists and just talking to them, they've been expressing concern over the time it has taken to get to this point. I believe it's been 11 years that this piece of legislation has been in the works, which is an awful long time for a Bill to be in the works. Can the minister comment on why it has taken so long to get to this point.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Well I will consult a little bit. I've been in position for two months and here it is, so I'm very pleased with the progress that we've made on this Bill since I've been in the chair.

On the other hand I can tell you that the department has worked with the therapists on developing the Act and we've reached agreement on the way to proceed. I will break for a moment if I can, Madam Chair, and consult a little bit further on what may have taken place prior to my arrival in the minister's chair. And I'll be back to you in just a second.

All right. I can respond somewhat to the answer. Essentially it comes down to capacity to act as a professional organization. Our consultation with the association has been extensive. But the province uses criteria to determine whether a health profession can be regulated. And those criteria used are similar to those that are used to evaluate a request for regulation of any profession in the province, similar to criteria used by other provinces to evaluate requests for regulation by health professionals.

These criteria fall into three categories. The first is whether or not there is a need for regulation of the profession and, of course, that criteria has been met. Whether the applicant association has the capacity to act as a regulator and this now has determined capacity has been met. And thirdly, whether the regulatory organization works . . .

A Member: — Harmoniously.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Harmoniously. Thank you very much. These big words. Harmoniously with other organizations representing the same profession for different purposes. I don't believe that that was ever a problem in this case.

So it basically came down to capacity. We've reached an understanding and are now able to proceed.

Mr. McMorris: — One question regarding again this Bill and the respiratory therapists. Somehow over the last month or so they were given some inaccurate information — I would probably say from someone in your department — saying that the Bill was being held up or wasn't going to go through. They were frustrated that perhaps they were given the wrong information on the various stages that the Bill goes through.

And I found it quite interesting that they have been waiting for 11 years for the legislation to go through. And then we get a phone call saying, how come it's being held up when it's only going through the normal stages of this Legislative Assembly?

I wonder if the minister could comment on I guess first of all, do all the officials that talk to this association know the steps that, the normal process of a Bill is the way this Bill is being treated?

In fact, you could probably argue that some of the Bills that are going through the House are going through quicker than they normally would. So I guess I'd ask for the minister's comment on that. Because it's a little frustrating when you hear from an association that has been waiting 11 years for the legislation and then it's going through the steps appropriately and accordingly to the Bill and they've been given information that was misleading.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I'm not sure that I'm in a position to comment too much on this other than to say that I would agree with the member that the Bill is proceeding quickly and according to process.

I did receive an email myself at some point a while ago asking if this Bill was going to proceed quickly and asking if I was aware if the opposition was stalling. I responded that the Bill had been introduced, it had gone into adjourned debates, and it

was a matter of referring it out of adjourned debates to committees to proceed. That's the normal process and that's where it was at that point in time.

I can't think that there would have been any reason to have suggested anything different, that this Bill was being held up or unduly held up for any reason.

Mr. McMorris: — Prior to this legislation, what was there in place — whether it was legislation or regulation — to protect the general public regarding the competency of respiratory therapists?

Ms. Warren: — Respiratory therapists are currently regulated to some extent, I suppose, by their employers who set out the criteria for employment. They're also members of the Canadian Society of Respiratory Therapists and their employers typically require membership with that association.

Mr. McMorris: — One question. As we go forward after this legislation passes, will the respiratory therapist regulating body receive any government money to carry out self-regulation? And, you know, any issues that may come out of that regarding the business affairs of the association, how are they going to be funded? Are they going to receive any government money to start off with?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — As with all other professional associations, they would not receive provincial government money. I'm not aware of any that do.

I was a member of the Saskatchewan Real Estate Commission for a while, a self-regulatory body for that industry. I know that all of their funds, whether it was for operations, education, or discipline, were all received internally. I suspect this is exactly the same.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one last question regarding the association. What steps will be taken to inform the public that there is the association in place now, and if there are complaints, that's the direction of complaints because . . . now that they're a self-regulating body?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The next step in this process would be for the respiratory therapists themselves to develop their bylaws. Those bylaws would also include regulatory authorities for their operating processes. Those bylaws would then be approved by myself prior to proclamation of the Act, and then a communications process would begin to inform the public that the authority was in place operating under the circumstances under which it will operate. And then things will begin.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one last question then. And I realize this is probably not for you to answer, but what is the timeline for that to take place, going through that process of developing bylaws and so that . . . and then the communications strategy? What is the timeline? Maybe they have it all ready to go because they maybe had it drawn up 11 years ago. I'm not sure.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — It is certainly in our belief that things will go very quickly. We have no interest in delaying the bylaws unless of course they come back with a lot of challenges within them. I suspect, like the member opposite, they've been

working on these bylaws. They want matters in place as quickly as possible, and the department and myself will work very diligently with them to expedite the approval of those bylaws and the development and execution of their communication strategy.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you. I really have no other questions. I just want to comment on the fact that we're glad to see this piece of legislation go through. We value the work of the respiratory therapists. And seeing as we have a reception with the lung association as soon as we're done here, we don't want to hold this Bill up any longer than we have to.

So as I said, on behalf of the official opposition we appreciate the work that the respiratory therapists do, and are glad to see that they have an Act respecting their profession.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. McMorris. That leads us to the vote of Bill 42, The Respiratory Therapists Act, 2006. And short title, is that agreed? Clause 1?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 51 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Thank you. Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Respiratory Therapists Act. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. Can I have someone move this without amendment please?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I move this without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Wartman. And thank you very much for your interesting questions. And thank you to the minister and his officials.

Bill No. 43 — The Medical Radiation Technologists Act, 2006

Clause 1

The Chair: — So moving on, the next Bill is Bill No. 43, The Medical Radiation Technologists Act, 2006. Any opening remarks from the minister?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I think only to indicate that medical radiation technologists are a regulated profession in eight provinces in Canada — Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, and Saskatchewan. And we are looking forward to the passage of this Act as it unfolds.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Taylor. Clause 1. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Again some questions on this Bill. I guess the questions will be similar to what

I had just asked regarding The Respiratory Therapists Act. Prior to the legislation, what was in place for radiation technologists as far as regulations and the monitoring of their work that they had done?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — All right. I can provide the answer to that question. The Medical Radiation Technologists Act was passed in 1983-84, proclaimed in effect in 1987, and was last amended in 1996. It replaced previously existing legislation, The X-Ray Technicians Act, and it included provisions that are now inconsistent with current regulatory principles and with the current practice of the provincial association. For example the existing Act requires council to undertake all disciplinary procedures, but it does not provide for separate discipline and investigation committees.

So basically we are now updating the Act to conform with the current template for health professions legislation and to bring the Act into line with the practice of the association.

Mr. McMorris: — So I assume that this association is funded again through its own professionals, the same as other associations. Is that correct?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The answer would be yes.

Mr. McMorris: — So for example if there was an investigation that was needed, who would pay for it? How does that work? Who pays for it to carry out the investigation?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — To the best of my knowledge the association charges fees to its members, and it operates all of its activities from a budget developed from those fees. I'm kind of jumping beyond the activities here that are specific to the Act and the information that I have.

Other professions would use money that comes from fines levied in disciplinary matters to also assist in financing investigations and disciplinary hearings, but for the most part those budgets are developed and created from the fees paid by the professionals themselves.

Mr. McMorris: — How many radiation technologists are there? How many are we looking at this Act covering, I guess for lack of a better term?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I'm told the number is 461 registered, active MRTs [medical radiation technologist] practising in Saskatchewan as of the end of 2005.

Mr. McMorris: — Just one question following that then. MRTs, medical radiation technologists, I would assume that there's many different subsections of that. Or, you know, for example people that operate ultrasound machines, would that fall into that? Can you just give me a brief breakdown of how that works?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I can provide the member with some very specific titles which will be officially registered under this Act. Just to clarify, though, in terms of his question, ultrasound technicians or sonographers are not included under The Medical Radiation Technologists Act and they have their own association.

Under the Act, the Act itself reserves the titles medical radiation technologist, medical radiology technologist, medical radiation therapist, nuclear medicine technologist, magnetic resonance technologists, and of course the abbreviations that follow that — RTRs [registered technologist, radiography], RTTs [registered radiation therapy technologist], RTNMs [registered technologist in nuclear medicine], and RTMRs [registered technologist in magnetic resonance] — as members of the Saskatchewan Association of Medical Radiation Technologists.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you for that answer. That certainly clears up a few things for me. Anyway that's about all I have for questions on this Bill.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. McMorris. If that's it for questions, we'll vote off Bill No. 43, The Medical Radiation Technologists Act. And again I would ask the indulgence of the committee to vote this off in sections. Do I have that agreement?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 54 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan enacts as follows: The Medical Radiation Technologists Act, 2006. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you . . . [inaudible interjection] . . . Thank you, Mr. Yates. Minister Yates reports the Bill without amendment. Thank you very much and thank you again for answering the questions. Minister Taylor.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — At the conclusion of these two Bills we will be bringing some additional Sask Health representatives forward. I would just like to thank Dorothea and Ron for their time at the table today.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Taylor. We'll take a two-minute recess to change officials. Thanks again for all your help here today.

[The committee recessed for a period of time.]

Bill No. 54 — The Cancer Agency Act

Clause 1

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Minister Taylor. Once again we welcome you for appearing in front of the committee with respect to Bill No. 54, The Cancer Agency Act. Did you have any opening comments on this?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Yes. I will introduce my officials with me, and I will give you a couple of brief remarks.

Of course I have with me today, to my right, Lauren Donnelly

who is the assistant deputy minister. And to my immediate left, David Smith, director, regional policy branch. And to his left, Kevin Wilson, executive director, Saskatchewan drug plan.

We have in front of us today The Cancer Agency Act which is intended to replace The Cancer Foundation Act as the legislative authority for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. Many of the newer administrative and financial accountability requirements which regulate regional health authorities will also now be applied to the agency through planned legislative amendments, not only to this Bill but also to The Regional Health Services Act that we will deal with later today.

Just a couple of the highlights of The Cancer Agency Act. We are updating the mandate of the agency to reflect its collaborative role with health regions in the delivery of cancer services, setting out a new board composition that is similar to that of the regional health authorities and will provide greater flexibility in the composition of the board, prescribing the agency as an information management service provider in accordance with The Health Information Protection Act or HIPA so that it has sufficient authority to continue to operate cancer screening programs.

The Act also requires the agency to adhere to the same administrative, financial, and other reporting requirements and limitations as health regions, including their reporting of critical incidents; and also clarifying the agency's role in the collection, use, and disclosure of personal health information required to manage the existing provincial cancer registry and operate related programs and ensuring information is managed in accordance with The Health Information Protection Act.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Taylor. Clause 1. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of questions on this Bill as well. Certainly there had just been a report done, the RockBank Consulting Ltd. on the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency report, phase one and phase two. We've received phase one. We haven't seen phase two yet. How much of an impact did this report have on this piece of legislation?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I'll ask Ms. Donnelly who was instrumental in the work around the study and the referral to the Act. Ms. Donnelly.

Ms. Donnelly: — So operational reviews are now a routine part of our business in the Health department. The cancer agency was one of the first agencies to undergo an operational review. It started with a high-level review — strategically, where should we go with the cancer agency into the future? Updating of the legislation was one of the key recommendations out of the phase one review, to be consistent with the RHA [regional health authority] legislation and to set the framework for a cancer control collaborative delivery network into the future.

Mr. McMorris: — It's my understanding that the consultant's report kind of laid out three directions, three possible directions for the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency. And this is kind of the one that causes the least disruption, really addressing the governance issue and that's about it. And this Bill doesn't go on

to address some of the other issues that the consultant had suggested. Is that accurate?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I can try to answer this because the Act isn't a complete response to the review's phase one or phase two. The Act provides us with opportunities now to explore further activities or initiatives within the agency. Getting governance, reporting, and privacy issues dealt with provides us with a lot more flexibility in moving forward. There will be additional responses to the consultant's recommendations in the future.

Mr. McMorris: — Okay. Yes. That will be interesting to hear then because I do . . . And I just received it, the report, a few days ago and haven't had a chance to go through it all. But it certainly has a number of recommendations and it'll be interested to see if the department moves on that. I mean, this is only one small piece of it, as you said, but there were many recommendations going forward.

So the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency will be looking, may be looking at changes into the future on how it operates. And I know that doesn't apply to the Act, but is that fair to say?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I think it's important to recognize that throughout the health field, we are constantly in transition with technology and human resources and drugs and treatments. There's a natural evolution in the way in which we respond to the needs of the people in the province and the people who provide the services.

So it would not be appropriate for things to remain static for very long so that . . . I'm trying not to spin too much, the answer being yes, there will be changes coming. Exactly how they will work out will depend on collaboration of the agency, the regional health authorities, outside consultants, Saskatchewan Health, users, patients, families, the quality of care consultants meeting and reporting out on a regular basis.

And I think we will see the development of more of a provincial focus. Right now the agency works from two separate clinics, one in Regina and one in Saskatoon. I think part of the recommendation and the direction that's provided by this Act will see a vice-president of cancer care services created with a ability to focus all of the services in the province from a provincial perspective. I think that'll be very helpful at the end of the day.

Mr. McMorris: — The Act, I believe, talks a little bit about the role of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency taking on more of an education portion, looking at dealing with education of the general public, and it's not only the general public but other areas of education that may not have been dealt with.

But there's an issue there when it crosses over into some of the work that the Canadian Cancer Society does, or the Saskatchewan branch. Do you see any problems with overlap because now it's mandating, I believe, education as part of what the cancer agency should do? Maybe I'll leave it at that because there's another question then with funding, but just on the education and the overlap . . .

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The Act sets out education as part of the

mandate of the agency. It doesn't direct the agency in any way as to how it would provide that education.

I believe that the cancer agency would see itself working with others to do the majority of that educational work, whether it is regional health authorities or the Saskatchewan, Canadian cancer societies or others. I think that at the end of the day what the Act wants to do is ensure that someone is responsible for coordinated cancer education. And the province, through the Act, gives the agency the responsibility for education to see that it happens. And how it happens could be in any number of different ways.

Mr. McMorris: — So it formally says to the cancer agency that they have a role to play in education. And I think maybe the cancer agency has always felt that although I don't know how much of a role they've played in that area.

There's always an issue of funding with the cancer agency. And now you're asking the cancer agency to assume more of a role in education. I think, you know, we couldn't agree more that education is an extremely huge part in the prevention. And we'll probably save dollars down the road. But how does it get from where it's at now to fulfilling this now mandated role of education when it seems like they're always struggling for funds? You know, we've talked about it in this House many, many times with different drugs coming online and issues like that, and more demand in the province.

So how is it going to fulfill this role unless there is extra funding specifically allotted for the education portion which they hadn't necessarily been filling before?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I can't speak too far into the future and I have limited access to what's been happening to the past, but I think given the percentage increases that the agency has received from this government in each of the last four years in any case, that the agency knows that this government is prepared to back up the commitment to the work that the agency is doing with additional dollars.

This year's overall operational budget for the cancer agency, I believe, is up 17 per cent. Previously it was up 10 per cent. I think the five-year average . . . Oh, I don't have that on the top of my head, but we've certainly seen substantial and significant increases to the cancer agency above the percentage average that the province has given Sask Health for those sorts of things.

So if the agency, in its negotiations with Sask Health over the course of the next eight months going into next year's budget discussions, indicates that they need additional dollars for X, Y, or Z, those requests will be considered.

Mr. McMorris: — You know, I certainly won't argue with the minister that there has been some major increases to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency because there has been and it's, you know, of the percentages that you just mentioned; you know, no reason to argue that that isn't the percentage.

But talking to people from the cancer agency, that seems to keep them at status quo. That seems to be able to just keep them at the wage level that they need to be at. It doesn't supply, at

those rates of increase in their funding, doesn't seem to give them any sort of surplus that they can take on a larger role or a role in the education area.

So I think it's all well and fine to recommend that they need to, you know, fulfill this mandate, but I think there's going to be an issue with funding. Because again, after talking to them, they're able to maintain the status quo with the increases but not take on a larger role, in particular this in the education area.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I guess all I can say in response to that is that we do have an ongoing, good working relationship with the agency. The agency also is working closely with the regional health authorities and others and will develop a way in which to respond to the mandate. I believe that they want to have education in their mandate and, as a result, will find the tools that they need to proceed.

Let me also be very clear that this year's provincial budget did increase generally to Health by 10.2 per cent. Roughly half of that \$300 million increase to Health is human resources, maintaining — some would argue — the status quo in the system for doctors, nurses, technologists, pharmacists, etc., across the piece, new contracts negotiated and signed with workers in each of the respective bargaining units. Secondly, the other significant portions were to cover increased drug costs and new technology coming into the system.

So we understand status quo is what we are funding. We are also trying to build within that status quo and the evolution of the system ability to bring in new initiatives and to move forward. The cancer agency has some responsibilities working with Saskatchewan Health. We'll do our best collaboratively to ensure that we're meeting the needs of Saskatchewan cancer patients and their families.

Mr. McMorris: — This Bill calls on the agency to submit operational plans to the department. Had that been required prior to this Act?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The answer is yes. But if you want some detail I can ask Ms. Donnelly to fill that in.

Ms. Donnelly: — We have been applying the same procedures to the cancer agency as we have regional health authorities. It just wasn't in their legislation so this was a matter of bringing those same requirements into their legislation. So informally the budget, the critical incidents, not in their legislation but they had been following the same practices.

Mr. McMorris: — So it really probably doesn't change the practice, as you said, of the agency. They had been following along. It formalizes what is expected of them.

One last issue, and I talked to the minister very briefly last night about it, was an amendment on clause 9 where it talks about . . . I'm just going to quickly refer to clause 9, when it talks that regional health authorities and health care organizations are officially named in this Act. And talking to a couple of other organizations, they felt that they should be recognized, not by name but as an interested party. And so I proposed a clause (c) naming any cancer-related organizations such as the Canadian Cancer Society and there's many other organizations dealing

with, you know, cancer awareness and education. And I thought it would be important to recognize those organizations formally.

I think, you know, talking to the cancer agency and the organizations, there seems to be a very good relationship between all of them working together. And so does it have to be formally recognized? And talking to the organizations they felt that it would help to be formally recognized in the legislation.

Before we get to that point in the Bill, because we've been running through these Bills — the clauses especially — so quickly, I don't know whether I'll be able to put the brakes on when we get to clause 9. I thought I'd ask the question right now. What is the minister's response to the amendment that I had put forward?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much for the opportunity to respond. I agree with the member; doing it now as opposed to going through the Bill would make some sense. And the main reason is because I will not be supporting the amendment being put forward, and this gives me an opportunity to explain that a little bit and have a bit of a discussion if the member wishes.

But before I provide some of my reasons for not wanting to support the recommendation, I just want to say thank you very much to the member for bringing it to my attention late yesterday because it has given us an opportunity to review all of the circumstances. And I hope I can give the member a very reasoned response as to why we can't support it rather than just an initial response.

On the surface when the member brought it to my attention last night, I thought it made perfect sense. And only in reviewing it against the existing provisions in the Act, existing practice and what the potential might be, have I concluded that I can't support it.

I'll begin by saying that Saskatchewan Health and the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency recognizes that the amendment would be of some assistance to the Canadian Cancer Society. And both the folks in Saskatchewan Health and the cancer agency appreciate, recognize, and value the important role that the society plays in all that they do.

We are not supporting the proposed amendment because, of course, as the member has already rightly said, it's not just the Canadian Cancer Society that would be included in the wording that has been brought forward. There are possibly hundreds of cancer-related organizations to which the proposed amendment could apply and it might place a very unreasonable expectation on the agency. I'll come to that in just a second.

Just a quick review of some of the concerns we have about other organizations that could be considered under cancer-related organizations since it's not defined in the Act. We just did a quick look at the website for the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada, a very respected organization, one that we would assume would be able to play a valuable role. On the website of the Cancer Advocacy Coalition of Canada, it acknowledges 16 supporting organizations, 14 of which are pharmaceutical companies, directly . . . private sector organizations involved in cancer-related organizations.

Section 9 of the Act applies to regional health authorities and health care organizations. That's the section that the member wants to amend. Regional health authorities and health care organizations aren't specifically defined under the Act. There's no question as to who the regional health authorities are or health care organizations. They are defined by section 9 of the Act.

When we go to section 10, the legislation permits the agency to continue to collaborate with the Canadian Cancer Society and other cancer-related organizations under agreement with the agency. So section 10 does provide the agency with the opportunity to continue to do what would likely be the impact of amending section 9, in any case.

We have consulted with the agency, who has indicated they would not support the proposed amendment because, as they say, not defining but forcing them to work with all cancer-related organizations is potentially onerous, unmanageable. They have sought some very quick legal counsel on this. And the agreement of legal counsel is that this indeed could place them in a position of having to consult with all cancer-related organizations before they did anything and, as a result, could find themselves in a very unmanageable position.

So understanding the intent that the member has and recognizing that the agency wants to maintain the relationship with the cancer society, we feel that the Act currently allows for that to happen. And both the agency and ourselves acknowledge that we want to continue to work with the cancer society. We feel that we would not support the movement to an amendment of this language at this time.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I, you know, I realize that point of, you know, the length of advocacy groups that there are when it comes to this issue. And I can see some concern working with certain groups, to a certain extent.

But when you look at the Act, it talks about health authorities and health care organizations. And when I think of those two organizations, they're the actual groups that deliver health care. There's a lot of people that advocate and have feelings — and strong feelings and thoughts — and can provide input in this whole issue that aren't delivery of health care. And that's certainly the only organizations that you're really talking about here, is people that deliver health care.

And it's a shame that we're missing the opportunity to formally recognize so many of the advocacy groups that do so much in this area. And I mean the one that we talk about the most is the Canadian Cancer Society, and in particular the Saskatchewan branch who . . . You know frankly I don't know if a lot of people out there know the difference between the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency and the Saskatchewan cancer society, even though it's called the Canadian Cancer Society, because they do such good work. And it's a shame that we can't formally recognize them as having a very important role.

I can understand the extension on to perhaps some of the pharmaceutical companies, some of the concerns that come in there.

But as I said, you know, I mean the amendment came from the

society because they want to be named as a major group — although they don't deliver health care — and that was the whole rationale behind this amendment.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — One of the things that might help to clarify this matter is that one of the other purposes of the Act, as we will see when we roll into the next Act about regional health authorities, is to tie the regional health authorities and The Cancer Agency Act to similar provisions and practices, where in fact recommended by the consultant's report earlier.

Section 9, the full section 9 reads very clearly:

Subject to *The Regional Health Services Act*, the agency is responsible for the planning, organization, delivery and evaluation of cancer care services throughout Saskatchewan in collaboration with:

- (a) regional health authorities; and
- (b) health care organizations.

It's very specific in the preamble to the section: "... delivery and evaluation of cancer care ..." The fact that it says you do this in collaboration with these is the current practice. There is a relationship that exists, a formal relationship that exists between the health authorities and the health care organizations currently. The provisions of the cancer society are ones that are reached in agreement, and section 10 allows for contracts to be created, formally recognizing it.

So I appreciate the member's comments and would agree that in general practical terms they have a tremendous amount of validity. I side with the lawyers, however, in the interpretation of the way in which the language applies to the delivery of the operations of the agency.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Minister Taylor, and the officials. So we'll proceed with voting Bill 54, The Cancer Agency Act, short title. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

[Clauses 2 to 8 inclusive agreed to.]

Clause 9

The Chair: — The amendment as presented by Mr. McMorris reads:

Amend Clause 9 of the printed Bill by adding the following after clause 9(1)(b):

"(c) any cancer-related organizations."

Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Chair: — I believe the nays have it.

So moving on to the original Bill, clause 9.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 9 agreed to.]

The Chair: — I'm going to be asking the indulgence of the committee to move forward in parts again. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clauses 10 to 30 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Cancer Agency Act. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Can I ask someone to move the Bill without amendment?

Hon. Mr. Yates: — Madam Chair, I move we report the Bill without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Yates. And thank you, Minister Taylor, and the officials, for dealing with those questions regarding that Bill.

Bill No. 51 — The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006

Clause 1

The Chair: — Moving on to Bill No. 51, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act. Minister Taylor, did you have any opening comments that you'd like to make?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I think yes, I'll make a short remark. Most of the proposed amendments are to the provisions relating to the accountability framework to which regional health authorities and health care organizations are subject, which will be extended now to the cancer agency, subject to the Bill that we've just dealt with.

Proposed changes to section 16 will clarify the role of the board Chair and allows board members in the absence of the Chair to designate a Chair from amongst other members. And then we have proposed changes to section 64 intended to explicitly set out the scope of the regulation power to establish, restrict, prohibit the charges that regional health authorities, health care organizations, and the cancer agency may make for health services.

The Chair: — Thank you, Minister Taylor. I would just like to make note to the committee that we have Mr. Borgerson sitting in for Minister Addley. And so we'll head to Bill No. 51, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006, clause 1. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Madam Chair. Again just a

couple of questions on this Bill, and it pertains to the last Bill that we had just finished. It really looks like the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency has become either the, depending on whether you . . . the 13th or the 14th health authority. Would that a fair characterization? Because everything that the regional health authorities have been doing, now the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency, it seems to fall in line. Is it fair to say that it would almost be the . . . I mean, there's 12 in the South and then the one northern health authority. Is this kind of the 13th, 14th health authority then?

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — The answer is both yes and no. The yes part is that all the accountability measures apply to both. The operating frameworks, etc., apply to both. Practically, we have included the cancer agency and meetings of health board Chairs and regional authority meetings.

The big difference however, the no part of it is, is that the cancer agency remains a provincial body, whereas the regional health authorities are indeed very regional and have very specific regional boundaries.

Mr. McMorris: — And I don't know if this necessarily pertains to the Act, but just for my own information then, the cancer clinics in both Saskatoon and Regina that operate in regional health authority hospitals, are they looked at then as clinics of the cancer agency? How does that relationship work?

Ms. Donnelly: — The clinics in Saskatoon and Regina — the Allan Blair in Regina, Saskatoon Cancer Clinic — are seen as clinics of the cancer agency. We have though 16 outreach sites as well, chemo outreach sites in the other regional health authorities where the staff are staff of the regional health authorities, though they're trained and overseen in terms of meeting the standards by the cancer agency. Does that answer your question?

Mr. McMorris: — Okay. Just one last question. Over the last number of years, the auditor when he returns his report, when he submits his report, talks often of different accountability issues with the RHAs. And I don't know whether you can answer this or whether it's up to the auditor now. Does the auditor then review the cancer agency in the same light as he's been looking at the RHAs?

Because as I said, every year when the auditor's report comes back, there's a number of recommendations on accountability of the RHAs. Will that then fall kind of in the same area with the amendments to this Act and the previous Act regarding the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency?

Ms. Donnelly: — I think the Provincial Auditor has looked at the cancer agency and made similar comments in the past as he has to the RHAs and will continue to in the future.

Mr. McMorris: — Okay. That's all I have.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. McMorris. So that leads us to the vote of Bill No. 51, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006. Clause 1, is that agreed, short title?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

[Clause 1 agreed to.]

The Chair: — And again, I would ask the indulgence of the committee to vote this off in sections.

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Okay.

[Clauses 2 to 29 inclusive agreed to.]

The Chair: — Thank you. Her Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan, enacts as follows: The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2006. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Thank you. Can I have someone move this without amendment please? Thank you, Minister Yates. Well I didn't recognize you so your microphone didn't get turned on. Could we try that again.

Hon. Mr. Yates: — I would move and report the Bill without amendment.

The Chair: — Thank you very much, Mr. Yates. Mr. Taylor, thank you and your officials for answering all the questions here today and appearing before the committee. Mr. McMorris.

Mr. McMorris: — I too would like to thank the minister and your officials for the amount of time we spent together over the last week or two, but in particular today answering questions on the Bills. Thank you very much.

The Chair: — Minister Taylor.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — And thank you. I also would like to thank the committee and all of its members for their indulgence this afternoon to help us move this legislation forward. And I thank my officials for their attendance today and helping us, the legislators, understand and move forward the Bills in front of us.

The Chair: — Thank you, Mr. Taylor. Can I have someone move that it be . . . Oh I now adjourn the committee. Thank you very much for everyone's attendance today.

[The committee adjourned at 17:19.]