



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

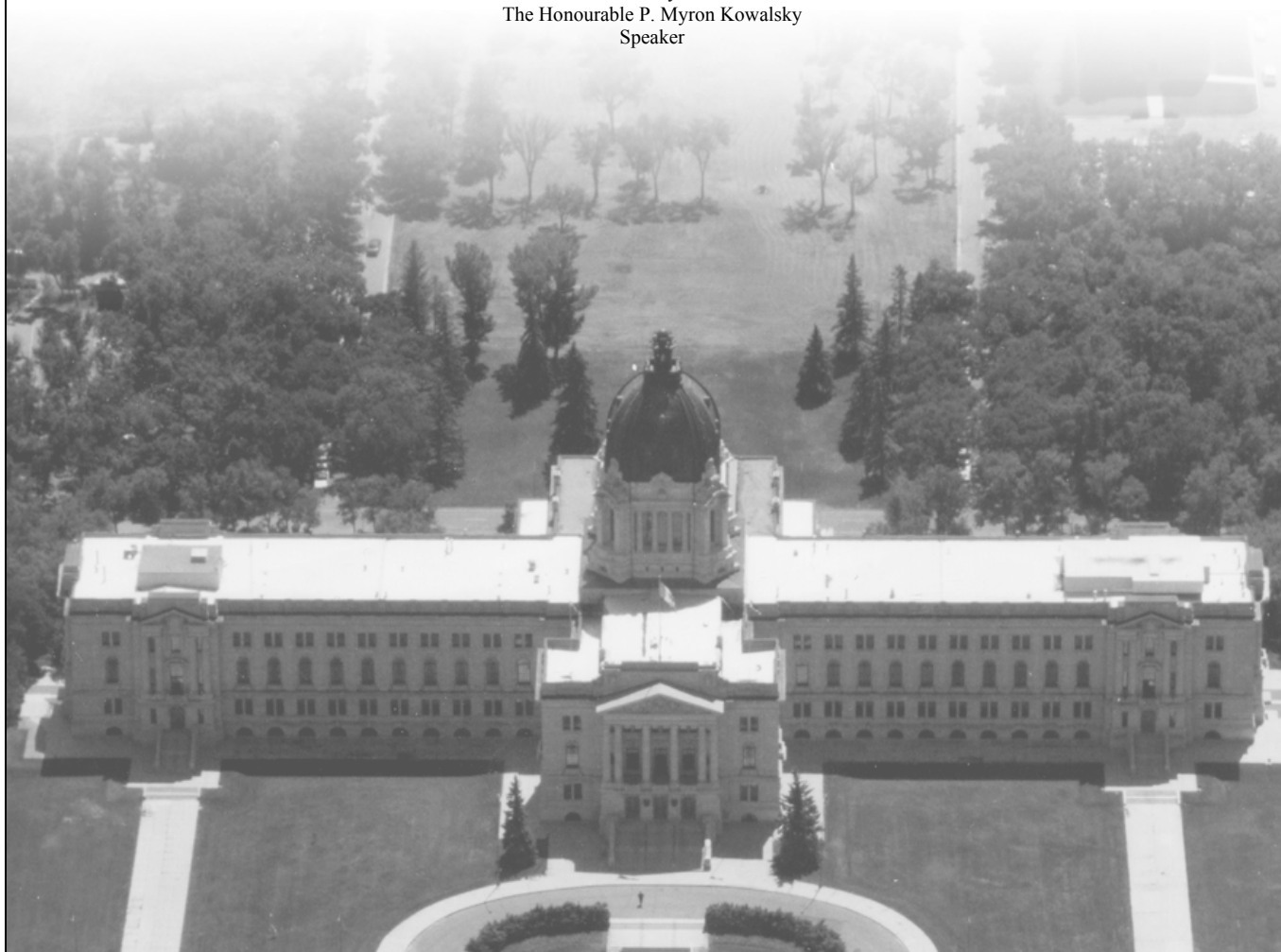
of the

Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of
The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Speaker — Hon. P. Myron Kowalsky
Premier — Hon. Lorne Calvert
Leader of the Opposition — Brad Wall

Name of Member	Political Affiliation	Constituency
Addley, Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Bakken, Brenda	SP	Weyburn-Big Muddy
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornerud, Bob	SP	Melville-Saltcoats
Borgerson, Lon	NDP	Saskatchewan Rivers
Brkich, Greg	SP	Arm River-Watrous
Calvert, Hon. Lorne	NDP	Saskatoon Riversdale
Cheveldayoff, Ken	SP	Saskatoon Silver Springs
Chisholm, Michael	SP	Cut Knife-Turtleford
Cline, Hon. Eric	NDP	Saskatoon Massey Place
Crofford, Hon. Joanne	NDP	Regina Rosemont
D'Autremont, Dan	SP	Cannington
Dearborn, Jason	SP	Kindersley
Draude, June	SP	Kelvington-Wadena
Eagles, Doreen	SP	Estevan
Elhard, Wayne	SP	Cypress Hills
Forbes, Hon. David	NDP	Saskatoon Centre
Gantfoer, Rod	SP	Melfort
Hagel, Glenn	NDP	Moose Jaw North
Hamilton, Doreen	NDP	Regina Wascana Plains
Harpauer, Donna	SP	Humboldt
Harper, Ron	NDP	Regina Northeast
Hart, Glen	SP	Last Mountain-Touchwood
Heppner, Ben	SP	Martensville
Hermanson, Elwin	SP	Rosetown-Elrose
Higgins, Hon. Deb	NDP	Moose Jaw Wakamow
Huyghebaert, Yogi	SP	Wood River
Iwanchuk, Andy	NDP	Saskatoon Fairview
Junor, Judy	NDP	Saskatoon Eastview
Kerpan, Allan	SP	Carrot River Valley
Kirsch, Delbert	SP	Batoche
Kowalsky, Hon. P. Myron	NDP	Prince Albert Carlton
Krawetz, Ken	SP	Canora-Pelly
Lautermilch, Eldon	NDP	Prince Albert Northcote
McCall, Warren	NDP	Regina Elphinstone-Centre
McMorris, Don	SP	Indian Head-Milestone
Merriman, Ted	SP	Saskatoon Northwest
Morgan, Don	SP	Saskatoon Southeast
Morin, Sandra	NDP	Regina Walsh Acres
Nilson, Hon. John	NDP	Regina Lakeview
Prebble, Hon. Peter	NDP	Saskatoon Greystone
Quennell, Hon. Frank	NDP	Saskatoon Meewasin
Serby, Hon. Clay	NDP	Yorkton
Sonntag, Hon. Maynard	NDP	Meadow Lake
Stewart, Lyle	SP	Thunder Creek
Taylor, Hon. Len	NDP	The Battlefords
Thomson, Hon. Andrew	NDP	Regina South
Toth, Don	SP	Moosomin
Trew, Kim	NDP	Regina Coronation Park
Van Mulligen, Hon. Harry	NDP	Regina Douglas Park
Wakefield, Milton	SP	Lloydminster
Wall, Brad	SP	Swift Current
Wartman, Hon. Mark	NDP	Regina Qu'Appelle Valley
Weekes, Randy	SP	Biggar
Yates, Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present regarding a public inquiry into SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company). I will read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition is signed by citizens from Estevan and not from Meadow Lake, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of people from my constituency who are very concerned about the centralization of laundry services in the Sun Country Health Authority. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that public consultations are done prior to changes to the health care services in Sun Country.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Estevan, Macoun, Bienfait, Benson, and Weyburn. I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am getting done the busload of petitions that have come in just recently, and they're all about school board amalgamation, amazingly enough. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force amalgamation on school divisions in Saskatchewan and to continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed once again from people from Goodsoil, Meadow Lake, and actually quite a few more from Meadow Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present petitions on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about SAMA (Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency) requisitions for school divisions. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse charges recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA, as this added burden for school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

And these petitions are signed by residents of Beaubier, Lake Alma, Gladmar, and the same on this page, and Weyburn, Trossachs, Yellow Grass. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition that also ... the same, to oppose SAMA requisitions for school divisions. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA, as this is an added burden for school boards that will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good folks of Hazenmore, Kincaid, Lafleche, and Meyronne. I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens that want to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan, continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

Signed by good citizens from Saskatoon, Dundurn, Davidson, Hanley, Kenaston. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to present a petition to revisit the effects of the TransGas Asquith natural gas storage project. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to immediately address the concerns of all individuals affected by this project, pay 100 per cent of the costs involved to rectify disruptions to water supplies, produce an environment assessment study encompassing a larger area outside the scope of the project, disclose the project's long-term effects on those areas, and consider alternative sources of water for the project.

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

Signed by hundreds of residents of Saskatchewan from towns of Langham, city of Saskatoon, Speers, Watrous, Vanscoy, Delisle, Grandora, and as far away as Brandon, Manitoba. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition regarding the increase in fees that SAMA is passing on to our municipal governments. It reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to make all necessary action to reverse changes recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA as this is an added burden for school boards and will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

Mr. Speaker, this petition comes from the fine folks from Esterhazy, Bienfait, Frobisher, and a number of communities. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise in the Assembly today and present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the alarming deterioration of the health care system. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Eaton ambulance services are not discontinued.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens of Eaton, Kindersley, and Mantario, Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition of citizens concerned about the SAMA requisitions for school divisions. And the prayer reads as

follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary action to reverse charges recently made that require the education sector to contribute to the cost of SAMA as the added burden of school boards will ultimately lead to higher property taxes for Saskatchewan residents.

And as duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures are from Humboldt, Bruno, Fulda, Muenster, Carmel, Lake Lenore, Pilger, and Meadow Lake. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition titled, petition to halt the forced amalgamation of school divisions. It's signed by a number of citizens from the province of Saskatchewan. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to reverse the decision to force the amalgamation of school divisions in Saskatchewan and continue reorganization of school divisions on a strictly voluntary basis.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, several pages here but they are primarily from Rosetown, although I've also seen Kindersley on the list. And I'm pleased to present this petition on these people's behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again on behalf of people who are concerned about SPUDCO:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to take the necessary action to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

The people who have signed this petition are all from Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan concerned about the ongoing SPUDCO scandal. And the prayer of their petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to hold an independent judicial inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petitioners today are from the communities of Rouleau, Weyburn, Saskatoon, and Regina. I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14(7) are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 107, 637, 638, 640, 647, 667, and 670.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 19, The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 19 — The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Cline: — I move this Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill 19, The Land Titles Amendment Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 75, The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 75 be heard in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister for Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been requested by the Minister of the Crown Management Board that the Committee of the Whole be waived. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 75 — The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I move that this Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Crown Management Board that Bill 75, The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I am directed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 77, The Public Works and Services Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 77 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Labour has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 77 in Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 77 — The Public Works and Services Act

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I move that this Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Labour that Bill 77, The Public Works and Services Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 78, The Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Repeal Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 78 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister Responsible for SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister for SPMC has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill 78. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 78 — The Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Repeal Act

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for Sask Property Management Corporation that Bill 78, The Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Repeal Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 72, The Traffic Safety Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 72 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 72 — The Traffic Safety Act

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I would move, Mr. Speaker, this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation that Bill 72, The Traffic Safety Act be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

(13:45)

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 73, The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 73 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole for Bill 73. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 73 — The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 sur les modifications corrélatives découlant de la loi intitulée TheTraffic Safety Act

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister for Highways and Transportation, that Bill 73, The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 76, The Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 76 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Ag has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole for Bill 76. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 76 — The Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill 76, The Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 57, The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — And when shall Bill 57 be considered in

Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Ag has requested leave to waive consideration of the Committee of the Whole of Bill 57. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 57 — The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Agriculture that Bill 57, The Irrigation Amendment Act, be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 79, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 79 be considered in Committee of the Whole House? I recognize the Minister for the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of the Environment has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole for Bill 79. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 79 — The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Environment that Bill 79, The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the legislature, seated in your gallery, some very concerned citizens. The Grandora & Area Water Committee met with the Saskatchewan Party Economy Committee this morning. They had a very good meeting.

I'd like to introduce to you Ron Stevens, Chair; Dean Diederichs, Vice-Chair; Marj Stevens, secretary; Audrey Bertrand, committee member. Other committee members Sandra Wice, Nelda Ripley, Glenn Thomson, and guests Marcel Bertrand and Ken Wice.

I would like to ask the members to join me in welcoming the Grandora & Area Water Committee to their legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Centre.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join the member opposite in welcoming the committee here today. We had a very productive meeting over lunch, and I think that they're doing very good work. And so I ask us all to give them a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to join with the member from Biggar and the Minister of the Environment on welcoming our guests. And in particular, Ron and Marj Stevens were formerly constituents from the

Kindersley area. And I welcome them to their legislature. They're missed at home but we wish them all the best wishes in their relocation in the Vanscoy area.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the Assembly today we have with us Mr. Jeremy Morgan, as well as the artist, Roger Jerome, and I'm sure we're going to hear more from a ministerial statement later. But I would ask that all members welcome these individuals to their Assembly as well.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Assembly to join me in welcoming Roger Jerome who is from Air Ronge, who is here with us today along with his wife, Flora, and granddaughter. Flora is up there.

And accompanying Roger is Jeremy Morgan, executive director of the Saskatchewan Arts Board. And Roger was chosen by the arts board to create a new mural in the Legislative Building as a part of Saskatchewan's centennial project, and I'll be making a ministerial statement later on this afternoon about that.

Also, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'm also very pleased to introduce Gabriella Martinelli, president of the Capri Films, who is currently co-producing Terry Gilliam's feature film *Tideland*, shot on location in Saskatchewan, and her assistant, Jason Shabatoski. Also accompanying Ms. Martinelli is Susanne Bell, director of programs and services at SaskFILM, and Rhonda Baker, an independent Saskatchewan film producer, who is the line producer of *Tideland*. I would ask all members to welcome these guests to the Chamber today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a couple of people in your gallery that are board members of the Saskatchewan Aerial Applicators Association, known as the SAAA.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be joined by more members later on this afternoon, but right now I'd like to introduce Jim Wood and Michael Yaholnitsky, who are board members of the SAAA. And I would ask all members to please welcome them to their Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Rosemont.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was beginning to wonder what one had to do to get noticed here. But I just want to . . . I just want to welcome a school group to the Legislative Assembly today. And I have to tell you people that are here that they don't always behave this way. But this is like the last day of school because this is the last day of the sitting of this session, so you'll have to be a little bit patient with them.

We have, Mr. Speaker, 19 students from St. Josaphat School in Regina Rosemont. They're with their teacher today, Dean Benko, intern Chelsea Romanyk, aide Nicole Williams. And I know that we're scheduled to have a photograph because we want to record this visit. And as well we're going to have a little visit from 2:30 to 3:00, and I look forward to speaking with them. And thank you very much for coming to the legislature today. Would everyone join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce a constituent of mine who is sitting behind the bar on the opposite side of the House, the former member from Melville, Mr. Ron Osika.

Mr. Osika spent four years on this side of the House as a Liberal, as many would know, and he spent a year in the Chair where you're sitting, Mr. Speaker, and then he spent three more years on the government side.

I think his opportunity to further his career in politics was more successful when he was sitting on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, than sitting on that side of the House. But seeing as he only spent three years on that side of the House and he's sitting on that side of the House right now, we'd invite him to sit behind the bar on this side of the House because, Mr. Speaker, I am looking for another lawn sign location in the next general election.

So I'd like all members to welcome Mr. Osika back to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to join my colleague in recognizing Mr. Osika. As we all know, Mr. Osika served with great distinction in this Assembly. And again, I've known Ron for a number of years, and he became a very close friend and a dear colleague and certainly has contributed a great amount to the people of Saskatchewan. I want to commend him publicly for that.

But I also want to point out in my closing comment that Mr. Osika's seen service from this side of the House which 28 of those guys on the other side will never see, Mr. Speaker. So the view from this area is tremendous, and I'm sure Mr. Osika in his past role appreciated that, and he'll continue working very hard. And I think, Mr. Speaker, I think he will be back. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Coronation Park.

Tommy Douglas Named the Greatest Canadian

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be prouder or happier. I'm proud of CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) for making *The Greatest Canadian* happen. I'm even prouder of Canadians who rose to the challenge by thinking out what it is to be Canadian, then debating with passion what it takes to be a great Canadian.

The field of nominees started at 100 and, Mr. Speaker, I say two things. First, all 100 nominees make us proud Canadians. And second, these 100 nominees were distilled from literally thousands of worthy Canadians, past and present. Our nation has much to celebrate.

As with any contest, one is honoured above all others. Canada's official greatest Canadian is none other than Tommy Douglas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Trew: — Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that he should be. More than anything else, Tommy's life work, medicare, defines what makes us unique in the North American context. The number one thing cited by Canadians as making us distinctly Canadian is medicare.

Mr. Speaker, Tommy Douglas was a man of vision, courage, compassion, honesty, and humour who will always be remembered as a man who inspired we Canadians to become more than merely the sum of our parts. Mr. Speaker, I swear I can see just over the horizon a new Jerusalem in this, our green and pleasant land. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Grandora and Area Water Committee

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to commend a group of people from the Grandora area who, through their efforts, have brought to the attention of the media and the public problems that has arisen from the TransGas natural gas storage project being conducted in their area.

TransGas is pumping 6.4 million litres of water from the Tyner Valley aquifer each day to flush out four underground salt caverns designed to prepare to store reserves of natural gas. Since the pumping has begun, residents in the area and outside the scope of the project have experienced problems with wells, dugouts and spring-fed sloughs. These problems range from wells running dry, lower water levels than projected, dirty water with taste, odour and colour problems. And more recently, their neighbours have been informed about unacceptable levels of nitrate and arsenic in their water.

Mr. Speaker, a committee that has been working hard on lobbying to have these problems addressed for a number of months has, under the insistence by the government, been formalized in order to continue to negotiate with the government. The Grandora and Area Water Committee consists of Mr. Ron Stevens as chairperson, Marj Stevens secretary, Dean Diederichs as vice-chairman, and Shelly Sarvas as

treasurer.

The committee and residents of Vanscoy, Grandora, and Asquith area deserve a great deal of credit forcing the NDP (New Democratic Party) government to begin to address the water concerns, but also exposing the deplorable state of the rural water supply. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Provincial 4A Championships

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On November 20, the Oxbow Prairie Heights Black Knights senior boys 4A volleyball team won the provincial 4A championship which was played in Unity and Wilkie.

This championship is the result of hard work and dedication by the players and excellent coaching by Coach Cal Rosenthal and his assistant Bart Mihaliez. The boys practiced or played four nights a week and generally had a tournament against a 5A team on the weekends.

The provincial boys 4A tournament consisted of 12 teams, three each from the four divisions. The Oxbow Black Knights had previously faced only 2 of these 12 teams. In the semifinals, Oxbow played Melville to advance. The final series was against Lumsden, one of the teams which they had previously played. The final game scores were Oxbow 25, Lumsden 20; Lumsden 25, Oxbow 22; Oxbow 25, Lumsden 22 — three very hard-fought, exciting games by well-matched teams.

(14:00)

Now if the member for Saskatoon Nutana was a volleyball player, she would be telling the opposing teams: stuff happens, suck it up, and get over it. However, high school volleyball is not that heartless. It's about sportsmanship and camaraderie, with teams cheering each other on and providing support and encouragement from the sidelines. Congratulations to the Oxbow Black Knights, provincial 4A volleyball champions, and congratulations to my son, Kelly, who worked very hard as part of the team.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

La Loche Hosts Provincial Volleyball Tournament

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Over the weekend I had the opportunity and the privilege to attend the provincial 4A volleyball championship tournament held in La Loche. I want to commend the Saskatchewan High School Athletic Association for choosing La Loche as the site for this year's event. This was the first time a provincial high school championship tournament was held in a northern community. Mr. Speaker, teams from all over the province came to compete for the title of Saskatchewan 4A volleyball champions. Lanigan was the overall winner, with Tisdale coming in second and La Loche, the host team, coming in third.

Mr. Speaker, this was a cross-cultural celebration as much as a volleyball tournament. And the people of La Loche can be very proud of the exceptional job they did as hosts. The opening ceremonies were particularly impressive and served as a showcase for First Nations culture. And here are a few of the comments, Mr. Speaker, from visiting players and coaches:

Thanks for the great experience! It's been the best provincials I've been to in four years. I loved the dancing.

That's Jessica Kolopenuk from Notre Dame.

I've never experienced such outstanding hospitality. Everyone's efforts were amazing. I cherished my time in the great North.

Jenny Wilkinson, Tisdale.

Thank you so much for hosting the tournament. The people who helped out were super nice and they are great cooks. The cultural experience is something I'll never forget. I enjoyed myself thoroughly.

Courtney Kindrat from Tisdale.

Your hospitality and your display of culture were second to none. The opening ceremonies were unforgettable. Thanks for hosting.

Scott Brinklow, Tisdale coach.

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate all the participants of this weekend's tournament, and I particularly want to compliment the people of La Loche for doing an outstanding job representing the spirit and hospitality of the North. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Future Plans for Humboldt Hospital

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt was built in 1955, and it is the largest rural hospital in the Saskatoon Regional Health Authority. Staffed with dedicated and hard-working professionals, St. Elizabeth's has delivered faith-based, high-quality health care services for 49 years now.

Around the facility's 40th year, structural deterioration and deficiencies were becoming increasingly challenging, and in 1996 a program facility planning committee was established to determine how best to address the issues surrounding an aging building. They determined that the most cost-efficient proposal would be to build an entirely new facility. In 1999 Sask Health approved a capital request for a new hospital and appropriate professionals were hired to proceed with drafting a plan. Since that time, the citizens of Humboldt and area have repeatedly been assured by this government that they will receive a new hospital but there has never been a commitment as to when that new hospital will begin.

Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to justify the expense of major

renovations when a new facility has been promised. But as time passes, the deterioration increases at an alarming rate. Through hard work and phenomenal organizational management, the Humboldt citizens and surrounding communities have honoured their commitment and they've reached their goal of raising 35 per cent of the funding needed to build a new hospital. Now, Mr. Speaker, will the NDP honour their commitment and will they keep their promise to Humboldt and community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Sutherland.

Saskatchewan: A New History

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, Dr. Bill Waiser is a constituent of mine from Saskatoon Sutherland. His list of accomplishments as historian, teacher, and writer is long and distinguished.

Dr. Waiser has been a member of the University of Saskatchewan history department since 1984, specializing in western and northern Canadian history. He's been department head, graduate director, and in 2002 won the College of Arts and Science Teaching Excellence Award for the humanities and fine arts.

Mr. Speaker, Dr. Waiser is also the author, co-author, or co-editor of eight books, mostly having to do with Western Canada. These include *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion*, co-written with Blair Stonechild, as well as *All Hell Can't Stop Us: The On-To-Ottawa Trek and Regina Riot*.

I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that Dr. Waiser's latest work is a history of Saskatchewan. Coming as it does on the eve of our centennial, the timing of this book couldn't be better. Saskatchewan's history is a unique story of challenge, innovation, and change. As we look back over our first 100 years, it is clear that Saskatchewan has a lot to celebrate and be proud of. And equally clear, there are lessons to be learned. Dr. Waiser's book, *Saskatchewan: A New History*, takes a new perspective on traditional topics and looks at subjects that before now have escaped attention.

I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating Dr. Waiser on this latest work. It will remind us of who we are, where we came from, and how we got there, which is important to know as we chart our course into the second century. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Commemorating the 50th Anniversary of Discovery Well

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this Friday, December 3, EnCana will hold a celebration to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the discovery well. The discovery well on the farm of Robert and Edith Dorsch in the Ralph area near Weyburn was drilled and put into production

the fall of 1954. This was the first producing oil well in our area. It opened up what has become known as the Weyburn field.

Mobil Oil, who owned the lease for where the discovery well was located, had given up on finding oil here and so they made a deal with two companies, Central-Del Rio and Central Leduc, to allow them to drill. And much to everyone's surprise and especially Mobil, they hit oil. At the time of the discovery these two companies were on the verge of going broke and actually had to pay their staff with shares in the company.

In the late '60s these two companies formed a merger with Canadian Pacific Oil and Gas, became PanCanadian. In 2002, PanCanadian merged with Alberta Energy Company to become EnCana.

An average well in Saskatchewan produces 20 barrels of oil a day. The discovery well began by producing 94 barrels per day. The discovery well was abandoned after 39 years of production but not before producing 211,834 barrels of oil, enough oil to fill 215 grain elevators.

This well was only the beginning, Mr. Speaker. The oil industry has been key to the economic viability of Weyburn and surrounding area and in turn it's played a large part in enhancing the well-being of our entire province.

I congratulate and thank all those in the oil patch who have, through hard work, innovation, and their willingness to be risk takers ensured that the oil industry in Saskatchewan has endured and prospered. What a great success story.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Food Bank Usage

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government prides itself on being compassionate, so they claim, in caring for Saskatchewan families. I remember when Premier Romanow ran for election back in '91, he promised the elimination of the need for food banks in the province of Saskatchewan. It was the centrepiece of his campaign then. It has remained a rallying cry for the NDP in Saskatchewan.

Last week though, Mr. Speaker, Campaign 2000 released its report on child poverty. It said there were 44,000 children who live in poverty in Saskatchewan. That's 2,000 more than the year before. To the minister responsible, why is child poverty on the rise in the province of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly we're always concerned about families who are living in poverty. But I have to say that ever since we instituted

Building Independence in 1997, we've seen a steady decline in the depth of poverty in Saskatchewan, ever since 1993.

I want to mention that Saskatchewan has the lowest rate of poverty in Canada for children living in two-parent families, and the third-lowest rate for children living in lone-female families. And we did have the second-lowest depth of poverty in Canada, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the principle, certainly, of what the minister is saying simply isn't true here in the province of Saskatchewan. In fact, there aren't a lot of growth industries in the province of Saskatchewan under the NDP. Unfortunately, though, one of them is food banks.

The number of food banks have increased across this province since this government was elected. This is now a rural and an urban problem. And the members heckle, Mr. Speaker. The NDP members heckle.

Here's what the Canadian Association of Food Banks say about what's happening in the province. They highlight that the second highest growth rate in food bank usage this year is occurring where, Mr. Speaker? It's occurring in the province of Saskatchewan.

In a letter to the minister dated November 23, the head of the Saskatoon Food Bank wonders how we can go 24 years without any meaningful increase in the food allowance. He raises the concerns of the hungry in his letter, Mr. Speaker.

One in five food bank clients say they are referred to the food bank by the minister's own officials, Mr. Speaker. What is the minister's plan to deal with the fact that the second highest growing province in Canada in terms of food bank usage is right here in NDP Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One of the things I would say to the members opposite, Mr. Speaker, is that we have actually had the income of a single parent, low-income, working, single parent on assistance, improve by \$6,000 over the last few years. And that's because we've included a number of supports which aren't reflected in the basic welfare rate.

The Campaign 2000 mentions that it's a multi-faceted problem that includes housing, child care, health care, employment supports. We have added all of those programs to support both individuals on and off social assistance, and unfortunately these reports don't count those other things in their statistics. But we are doing exactly what Campaign 2000 recommended, and I think we're going to see even bigger improvements when the housing allowance that we've committed to is implemented in April 2005.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, food bank usage in the province of Saskatchewan is second highest in the country; it's on the rise in the province. There are food banks opening in rural and the need for the food banks in urban Saskatchewan is being exacerbated.

Former NDP cabinet minister Bob Pringle is now the executive director of the Saskatoon Food Bank. He is not afraid to speak frankly to this government or to the opposition, to whomever will hear. And here's what he said in a recent interview, and I quote:

I'll just say it the way it is. We've had more interest by the opposition in these issues than by the government.

To which the minister replied:

The Premier was the minister of Social Services. I doubt there's very much about this that he doesn't understand.

Mr. Speaker, then to the minister: would she tell the members of this Legislative Assembly — and most importantly, those who need to use food banks, those who are in poverty in the province of Saskatchewan — how understanding helps them at all? That whether or not the Premier understands the issue is irrelevant. What is this NDP government doing about the problem?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Community Resources and Employment.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I want to reiterate that nobody wants to make progress on this issue any more than myself and we are meeting regularly with food banks, food security programs, poverty organizations. And certainly, as we have in every budget over the last several years, we'll be bringing forward new improvements. And we've done that a great deal in the area of people with disabilities as well.

But I want to just remind the member opposite, while he's busy pontificating there, that in 1999 when he was talking about how he was going to achieve tax breaks, he committed to chopping 50 million off the spending of the Social Service department. And I would like to know where exactly he would be getting that 50 million from.

As well, the people who were involved in doing these assessments cite the minimum wage as one of the issues and I'd like to know the member opposite's view on that as well.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Fire Suppression Fleet

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker,

this NDP government spent over \$1 million exploring options for replacing its forest firefighting fleet. And other than some consultant's report and two trips to Australia, it seems all ideas were abandoned except the one that they started with.

Mr. Speaker, to the former minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation: other than his souvenir Crocodile Dundee hat, can he tell us what he learned about firefighting aircraft during his trip to Australia?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Approximately four years ago, the Department of the Environment began exploring funding models for supporting a reinvestment in Saskatchewan's fire suppression fleet.

The Department of the Environment explored a number of options including leasing, purchasing new planes, and also the possibility of public-private partnerships. They asked the Crown Investments Corporation to examine the possibility of P3s as the solution for their fire fleet planes.

Mr. Speaker, as part of CIC's (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) examination, they looked at a number of issues including how could we deploy these planes to make this P3 commercially viable in the off-season, Mr. Speaker. And obviously we looked to Australia because their fire season is in opposition to ours, or at the opposite end. So, Mr. Speaker, what we tried to do was to ensure that this idea of a P3 was commercially viable, and in order to have a commercially viable solution you needed to deploy those planes during all the seasons.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:15)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, according to the Minister of the Environment, he says the CIC investigation discovered two very, very interesting things. One is Australia is a long way from Saskatchewan. The second is Australia uses a different kind of an aircraft. Mr. Speaker, to the Minister responsible for CIC, why didn't she give her officials a map and a telephone to find out exactly the same thing that the Minister of the Environment discovered.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, over the course of the P3 development when CIC was pursuing the option of a private-public partnership, Bombardier, which is an important aircraft industry in this country, relaunched its capability to add turbine engines to its previously released planes. Mr. Speaker, this meant that Saskatchewan Environment could save approximately \$100 million over the life of the project.

And, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we decided to pursue an option that involves the relaunching of these piston planes because Bombardier could retool them and that, at the end of the day, saves the taxpayers' money.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this NDP government spent more than \$1 million for the trips and the consultant's reports. Mr. Speaker, will the minister responsible for CIC table all of the documents related to this decision so the people of Saskatchewan can determine for themselves if they got a fair value for their tax dollars.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for the Crown Management Board.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, there is no question that at the request of the Department of the Environment, CIC did its due diligence on the possibility of a private-public partnership. Mr. Speaker, as a result of Bombardier deciding to relaunch a particular technology where they could put piston engines back into these planes, it extended the life of these planes by approximately 25 years. Mr. Speaker, we saved \$100 million over the life of the project.

Now the members of the opposition or is it the flopposition — I can't quite remember — they may not quite understand the notion of \$100 million in real savings, Mr. Speaker, but our government does. Because of Bombardier's technology, it allowed us to retool these planes and extend their life for approximately 25 years.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the minister talked about options that were available in public-private partnerships. Well one viable option that's now working in New Brunswick, Manitoba, and Alberta, to a smaller degree, and in Ontario is the single engine air tanker program. This is used for fire suppression, and it's extremely efficient and extremely effective — something that people on that side of the House do not understand.

And the minister wishes to talk about saving of dollars. The cost of their project is \$200 million over the life of the project. This is capital dollars that would not have needed to be spent if they entered into partnership with the SEAT (single engine air tanker) program.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of the Environment: was this option ever considered?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, in fact actually we've met with the Aerial Applicators

Association to discuss this. And they do offer a fine program, and it does work in certain areas as the member opposite talked about. But it didn't meet the requirements that we have here in Saskatchewan.

We have greater distance to fly. The new configuration of what we're talking about has a greater load capacity, greater speed capacity. But we continue to discuss with these folks, and as well, there's great work for them. I understand that some have actually entered into agreements with certain RMs (rural municipality) about this, along the forest fringe — a very important area along that area for them to be involved in.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

SaskTel Investment in Navigata

Mr. D'Autremont: — The NDP government has invested \$60 million today in a BC (British Columbia) telecommunications company called Navigata. In its first three years since the government bought this company, Navigata has lost just over \$25 million.

To the minister: is Navigata expected to show a profit or a loss this year, and how much is that profit or loss expected to be?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Telecommunications.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well in case the members are unaware, Navigata first of all is being used as a vehicle, if you will, to get into the markets, into Alberta and British Columbia. The Voice over Internet Protocol — if you'll listen, Mr. Speaker — the Voice over Internet Protocol is clearly going to be, I think, most telecommunications companies will say, will be the way of the future.

I think, first of all, it would be the view of SaskTel, Mr. Speaker, that the research and development needs to take place. You need to find the marketplaces, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, it would be the view as well of SaskTel that this is a very worthwhile investment. It wasn't expected to make money in the first few years, Mr. Speaker. Every other telephone company in North America, in the world, Mr. Speaker, is putting large amounts of money into research and development in this very area, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the government certainly is putting large amounts of monies, but it's interesting to note that the Voice over Internet that they're talking about is taking place in BC and Alberta, not in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, on page 19 of SaskTel's 2003 annual report it

says, and I quote: “Navigata . . . is expected to start generating a profit in 2004.” Is that true? Does the minister expect Navigata to turn a profit this year? Or is there going to be a continuation of its money-losing record? How much do we expect to either profit or lose, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I’ll answer the question again. I’ll answer the question, Mr. Speaker, but let me make this point first.

I find it passing strange, you know, that they used to ask questions about Austar, Mr. Speaker. They used to ask questions about Austar. Isn’t it interesting? When they wanted us to sell it and we said we shouldn’t, we should maintain the ownership in that investment, Mr. Speaker, if we’d have sold it when they wanted us to sell it, Mr. Speaker, there would have been a loss, Mr. Speaker, albeit it would have been a small loss at the time but there would have been a loss. Interesting, it’s now been sold, Mr. Speaker, those shares, and we now see a profit for the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — So I think, I think, Mr. Speaker, we should, we should respect the experts in the area. We should respect the experts in the area who say that this is an area where much research and development needs yet to take place. Every telephone company in the world says that.

Mr. Speaker, the investment, they will know from reading the annual reports, is about \$60 million. The losses so far have been about 25 million and, Mr. Speaker, the savings to the parent company have been roughly 10 million so far.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D’Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister talks about Austar, another NDP success story — they didn’t lose as much money as they could have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D’Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, the NDPs originally spent 45 million of taxpayers’ dollars on Navigata. Earlier this year they injected another 15 million taxpayers’ dollars into this company. That’s the \$60 million that the Minister of Agriculture was talking about that he couldn’t find for CAIS (Canadian agricultural income stabilization) program, Mr. Speaker. Does the minister expect the government to have to inject more money into Navigata, or is he ruling out putting any more money into this failing operation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskTel.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Well, Mr. Speaker, it feels like nothing

has changed here. You know, several days ago they voted in support of public ownership and now they stand and they criticize, Mr. Speaker. They criticize continually.

Mr. Speaker, can they hold any position consistently? It is clear that every telephone company, Mr. Speaker, in North America, in the world, believes that this is the area that telephone companies need to do research and development, where this is the marketplace in the future for telephone companies, Mr. Speaker.

SaskTel is exactly the same. They’ve led in many areas, they’ve led the world in their research and development — led the world. And we have proven, SaskTel has proven many times that they have made the right investments, contrary to what the opposition continually says, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, two weeks is not a very long session by anyone’s measure. But it is plenty of time for the people of the province to realize that this government has learned precisely nothing.

They’ve learned nothing from the last election. They’ve learned nothing from the myriad of mistakes they’ve made. They’ve learned nothing from the fact, Mr. Speaker, that they seem to be able to talk the talk when it comes to feeding the hungry or when it comes to reducing waiting lists, but their actions speak louder than their words, and their actions are woefully inadequate.

The session began with the people of Saskatchewan and the opposition for the province of Saskatchewan asking for a public inquiry into the largest government business scandal in the history of Saskatchewan — SPUDCO, Mr. Speaker — 10 times bigger than the federal sponsorship scandal.

In light of all the unanswered questions and the unwillingness of the NDP to come clean on this scandal, Mr. Speaker, I ask anyone over there frankly if they yet have found the courage to do the right thing and have a public inquiry into the SPUDCO scandal.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for SaskWater.

Hon. Mr. Prebble: — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has indeed been 12 important days of debate.

And, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the member of the opposition what he said on October 20 in John Gormley. He said there were three major reasons why there should be a public inquiry. First he said, Mr. Speaker, because the Government of Saskatchewan, he claimed, had spent money without lawful authority. And we’ve demonstrated in this legislature very clearly, backed up by the Provincial Auditor and by private auditors as well, Mr. Speaker, that this

government has acted lawfully.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, he claimed on John Gormley on October 20 that the government had failed to meet its obligations with respect to Ducks Unlimited and Rafferty-Alameda. And we demonstrated clearly, Mr. Speaker, in this legislature, that the obligation to Ducks Unlimited and to Rafferty-Alameda have been met in full, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, there are no answers on those issues coming forward from this government. In fact the latest development in SPUDCO was the need for that minister to apologize for that Deputy Premier and that Premier for manipulating the courts of Saskatchewan with taxpayer-funded lawyers, for their own political benefit.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And still the Deputy Premier sits there without any discipline, without any punishment. The Premier is silent on the issue. And the minister is proud, Mr. Speaker.

Economy of the Province

Mr. Wall: — We also know, Mr. Speaker, we also know after this two-week session that the NDP government now has almost \$1 billion dollars that they didn't budget for. We know that they refuse to fund their share of CAIS up to and including this day because they said they were broke, Mr. Speaker. We have one-time hurt in the agriculture community in rural Saskatchewan; the NDP has one-time money. Do they have a thin dime of it for rural Saskatchewan? The answer is no.

The question to the Minister of Agriculture is this: has he learned his lesson from this session — will the NDP keep their commitment to CAIS in rural Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this agenda this session was about identifying who it is in Saskatchewan that could govern, Mr. Speaker. And this session, Mr. Speaker, was to examine what it is that the opposition could do and what this government is doing, Mr. Speaker.

This agenda, Mr. Speaker, in this session was to advise Saskatchewan people of how it is we're building the economy. And how are we doing it, Mr. Speaker? We found additional money, Mr. Speaker, in health care, Mr. Speaker. We built the new . . . found additional money for equalization, Mr. Speaker, for the people of Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, we changed the oil revenues . . . oil royalties in this province so that, Mr. Speaker, we could get a better benefit for Saskatchewan people.

And the opposition, Mr. Speaker, had an opportunity to talk about their Enterprise Saskatchewan. And did they talk about Enterprise Saskatchewan? Not one word for two weeks about

Enterprise Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Did they talk about how they're going to grow the economy? Not at all, Mr. Speaker. Instead, Mr. Speaker, they began a character assassination on the public service, on the government of . . . on previous government members — that's what they did.

The Speaker: — The member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member's time truly has elapsed, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks is not a long session, but it is more than enough time for the people of this province to see that this is an NDP government that can monitor waiting lists in health care but they have no plan to deal with them. Two weeks is long enough for the people of the province to see that this is a government that can say that it's concerned about the hungry, but there's no action to feed the hungry, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks is long enough for the people of the province to see that this is an NDP government that says they care about rural Saskatchewan and refuses to keep their commitment to the CAIS program that they negotiated and signed. And two weeks is long enough, Mr. Speaker, for the people of the province to see that that Deputy Premier and that NDP government have no interest in getting to the truth about SPUDCO.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, the question then to the NDP government is pretty basic. Why should the people of this great province suffer one moment longer under this government that is lacking vision and frankly, Mr. Speaker, is more interested in misleading the people of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Mr. Speaker, we want to be on record, Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House that we made a promise to Saskatchewan people on the lowest priced utility bundles and that we've . . . (inaudible) . . . We want to be on record for that, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And we want to be on record on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that when we needed to fix equalization for Saskatchewan people that we fixed equalization for Saskatchewan people . . . (inaudible) . . . We want to be on record for that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Serby: — And we want the Saskatchewan Leader of the Opposition to be on record, Mr. Speaker, when he says we're the most open party in Saskatchewan and that we're going to have open panels and open plenary sessions, and 10 minutes later, Mr. Speaker, he's in the rotunda saying I'm sorry we're not going to do that, Mr. Speaker, to flip-flop.

We want the Leader of the Opposition to be on record where the member from Souris-Cannington says we're going to sell off the liquor stores in Saskatchewan, and the member from Maple Creek is going to say we're going to sell off, Mr. Speaker, the bus company, and the Leader of the Opposition says you know what, no, we're going to vote for the . . . (inaudible) . . . That's, Mr. Speaker, what this session's about. You can count on this government telling you what the Saskatchewan people are going to get. You can't trust the . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it won't be very long before the people of Yorkton agree with the Speaker of the Assembly when they say the member's time has elapsed.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order, order. Now I would ask the member, I would ask the member to keep the Speaker out of the debate. And many members have had the statement of their time elapsing. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Deputy Premier talked about rebates, you know this new NDP scheme where they're going to give the taxpayers' money back to the taxpayers; they're going to give them their money back. You know what I think, Mr. Speaker, I think the voters of the province of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan families, they don't want their money back from this government — although fair enough this government takes a lot of it — I don't think they want their money back as much as they want their votes back from this government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — When they hear an answer like that from the Deputy Premier, when they see their Premier come back from Ottawa and say Saskatchewan will always need equalization; will always need welfare. That's what the Premier of the province said about the future of Saskatchewan.

This session has highlighted for Saskatchewan people that that party is interested only in mediocrity. The official opposition will continue to tell the province and tell the rest of the country about the great potential of Saskatchewan. If only we could change the government, Mr. Speaker.

The question to the Deputy Premier is this: on these issues of SPUDCO, and on these issues of CAIS; on these issues of keeping faith with the people of the province, when can they expect him and his NDP government to keep their word, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Mr. Serby: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I am reading from an article here of Friday, November 12 and the Leader of the Opposition says this:

If someone is trying to decide who to vote for, who to support and . . . (where) they go 'well, my perception is . . . this party, the Saskatchewan Party, is a right-wing party,' . . .

Mr. Speaker, is what he says. And then, Mr. Speaker, Mr. George Gallagher gets on to his radio station. He says this, Mr. Speaker:

Of course we've always known what Lorne Calvert and his persuasion was about, but (Mr. Speaker) . . . we don't know what the Leader of the Opposition is . . . (Mr. Speaker).

And this is from Mr. George Gallagher, one of the most significant conservative leader . . . persons in the province. And he says, Mr. Brad Wall, we believe at the helm, is yet another socialist, Mr. Speaker. And he says that, Mr. Speaker, because what we've seen from this session is an absolute flip-flop on every issue, Mr. Speaker, that comes forward.

And we have an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, during this session to have the Leader of the Opposition put forward his, his vision, for what this province should look like. Instead, Mr. Speaker, we don't see anything from the Leader of the Opposition in terms of what their vision should look for.

And I say this, Mr. Speaker, that when the people of Saskatchewan vote again the next time, Mr. Speaker, we will see the Leader of the Opposition getting his second severance package from the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Artist Chosen for Saskatchewan Centennial Project

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, northern artist Roger Jerome has been chosen to create a new mural in the Legislative Building as a Saskatchewan Centennial project. This project will reflect the lives of indigenous people from northern Saskatchewan.

The painting will be installed in the spring of 2005. The centennial mural will be a key architectural and artistic highlight in the Legislative Building and is an important opportunity to present the stories and ways of life of northern Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis people.

Roger Jerome is an artist from Air Ronge who has lived in the North for most of his life. His subject matter often consists of portraits and northern scenes including traditional events. Roger and his wife Flora have been married for 38 years. They have a son, Robert, who is carrying on the family's art traditions as a carver in traditional media.

The Arts Board was contracted to manage the centennial project on behalf of the province of Saskatchewan. The mural is expected to be unveiled in May 2005 during the royal visit by

Her Majesty the Queen.

Roger Jerome represents a true example of the creativity and imagination of the people of northern Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to respond on behalf of the official opposition and thank the minister for the ministerial statement she provided to me earlier.

This is a very exciting prospect for this great building in this great province. Having art reflecting northern Saskatchewan is particularly a good thing because, when we bring people from all over the world here, this is art as a medium; our first peoples, the Aboriginal persons of this province. It exists nowhere else in the world. It is distinctly Canadian. It is distinctly something from Saskatchewan, and we should honour this and prize it.

And I had a few moments, Mr. Speaker, to speak with the artist and Mr. Morgan beforehand and he tells me, it is going to be a fantastic piece put forth.

I've only been here a few years, but I've noticed, throughout the halls of the Legislative Assembly, we often have this dull white colour. And having art throughout, as we do in some of our galleries, it livens up the people's place of government. This is going to be a wonderful centennial project. We commend the artist. We know he's going to do a wonderful job, and we look forward to seeing the unveiling in 2005. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker . . . No, I'll wait until we deal with written questions, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before orders of the day, I wish to raise a point of order with you.

The Speaker: — . . . the member state his point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much. Last night, Mr. Speaker, the Human Services Committee dealt with supplementary estimates for the Department of Learning. During the course of the evening, members raised a number of questions regarding school board amalgamations. These questions were certainly pointed and for the most part were fair and thorough.

I do wish however to draw to your attention a set of comments

raised by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood concerning the individuals serving on the restructuring coordinating committee. During the questioning, the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood called into question the professional ethics of the committee members and ascribed personal or parochial gains as motivation for participating in this committee.

Mr. Speaker, this committee is comprised of members of the senior representatives and educational professionals from the school board association, the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Association of School Business Officials, LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents of Saskatchewan), the school councils, CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees), SEIU (Service Employees' International Union).

Mr. Speaker, these comments were inappropriate, unfounded, and — I would contend — unparliamentary. I draw to your attention Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, paragraph 493 in which it notes, with reference to a member's parliamentary privilege, that:

The Speaker has cautioned Members to exercise great care in making statements about persons who are outside the House and unable to reply.

Mr. Speaker, the committee members serving on the RCC (restructuring coordinating committee) are educational professionals and leaders in their sector. They represent their diverse memberships and bring to the table professionalism, experience, and dedication to education.

To allege that these people are unable or unwilling to act in the best interests of the people and organizations they represent and that they would somehow use their influence for personal or parochial gain is at best inaccurate and at worst defamatory. I would ask that you rule if the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood has abused his parliamentary privilege and at very less invite him to explain his comments to this Assembly and apologize to these educational professionals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — On the point of order, I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to your ruling, but before I go there, I want to point out that is not a point of order. That was a speech on an issue that our member raised, that he may not have agreed with, which has no relevance as far as a point of order.

Our member last night spoke of conversations that he's had with people throughout the education field, and he was relating the comments that he heard from those people regarding the people that the minister just talked about. It was a debatable point relaying the information that he had received through constituents and through people in the education field.

Now if that is a point of order where he can stand up and make a speech because he disagrees with what our member had said, then it throws out the whole issue of point of orders because it

was nowhere close to a point of order. He was simply relaying the message that he has heard from constituents, people in his constituency, and people in the education field, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, please. At this time I would just like to draw to the members' attention from Beauchesne's, 6th Edition, no. 822, which speaks to:

Procedural difficulties which arise in committees ought to be settled in the committee and not in the House.

The point of order . . . Order. Order, please. The procedural point of order is regarded as a procedural difficulty, so I find the member's point of order not well-taken.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 885 and 886.

The Speaker: — Responses to 885 and 886 have been submitted. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable question no. 887.

The Speaker: — 887 has been converted to debatable.

(14:45)

MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Recess of the Assembly

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I have already recognized one member in the House, but I'm just trying to bring the House to order. I recognize the Government House Leader once again.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That this Assembly recess until 10:15 p.m. or until the adjournment of the Human Services Committee and the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee and that the Speaker shall sound the bells five minutes before the expiry of the recess to summon members back to the Assembly.

I so move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That this Assembly recess until 10:15 p.m. or until adjournment of the Human Services Committee and the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee and that the Speaker shall sound the bells five minutes before the expiry of the recess to summon members back to the Assembly.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Dearborn: — Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Would the member state his point of order.

Mr. Dearborn: — Distinctly I heard, Mr. Speaker, a member of Saskatoon Nutana make an unparliamentary remark to a member on this side. It was theriomorphism, Mr. Speaker. The member from . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, you can look that one up. The member from Nutana distinctly made reference to an individual on this side as a dog.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — I do want to withdraw my comments, but I was making reference to all members on that side.

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

I would recognize that . . . I would ask members to recognize that the Speaker is not able to hear all of the remarks that go across the floor. I notice that the member responded and did acknowledge with an apology. Order. And I would ask though that whenever any apology is given, it be done unequivocally without any other remarks. If the member wishes to do so at this time, she may.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, I apologize unequivocally.

The Speaker: — Now the question before the Assembly is the motion . . . Order. Now the question before the Assembly is a motion moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Nutana:

That this Assembly recess until 10:15 p.m. or until the adjournment of the Human Services Committee and the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee and that the Speaker shall sound the bell five minutes before the expiry of the recess to summon members back to the Assembly.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands recessed until the call of the bell.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I have been instructed by the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report Bill No. 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 68 be referred to Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

(16:15)

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Government Relations has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 68 in Committee of the Whole. Is this leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 68 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — I move that the Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure.

Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure

Mr. Harper: — Mr. Speaker, I have been instructed by the Standing Committee of Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure to report Bill No. 58, The Cities Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 58 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Government Relations has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 58 in Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 58 — The Cities Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 58, The Cities Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 85, The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill 85 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation has requested leave to waive Committee of the Whole for Bill 85. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 85 — The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation that Bill No. 85, The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 83, The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 83 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I request leave to waive consideration in the Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole for Bill 83. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 83 — The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill 83, The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 84, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2) without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 84 be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Health has requested leave to waive consideration to take Bill 84 to Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall Bill 84 be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 84 — The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)/Loi n° 2 de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil

The Speaker: — I recognize the minister.

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 84, The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2) be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

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

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its second report. I move, seconded by the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services, the member for Saskatoon Eastview, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on Human Services be now concurred in.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

Deputy Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the Assembly to go into Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

Motions for Supply

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I move that, number

one:

Resolve that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, the sum of \$268,138,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, number one:

Resolve that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005, the sum of \$268,138,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Is the committee ready for the question? Is this agreed?

Some Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Chair: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I move, number two:

Resolve that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 which to the extent that they will remain unexpended for the fiscal year are also granted for the fiscal year ending on March 31, 2006, the sum of \$1,208,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

The Chair: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, number two:

Resolve that towards making good the supply granted to Her Majesty on account of certain charges and expenses of the public service for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2005 which to the extent that they will remain unexpended for the fiscal year are also granted for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2006, the sum of \$1,208,000 be granted out of the General Revenue Fund.

Is the committee ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Chair: — Is this agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Chair, I move the committee rise and that the Chair report that the committee has agreed to certain resolutions and ask for leave to sit again.

The Chair: — Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried.

Motion agreed to.

FIRST AND SECOND READING OF RESOLUTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of committees.

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Finance has agreed to certain resolutions, has instructed me to report the same and to ask for leave to sit again.

The Speaker: — When shall the resolutions be read the first time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that the resolutions be now read the first and second time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that the resolutions be now read the first and second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to and the resolutions read a first and second time.

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — First and second reading of these resolutions.

The Speaker: — When shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Later this day.

The Speaker: — Later this day. I recognize the Minister of Finance.

APPROPRIATION BILL

Bill No. 89 — The Appropriation Act, 2004 (No. 4)

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly I move that Bill No. 89, The Appropriation Act, 2004 (No. 4) be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has moved that Bill No. 89, The Appropriation Act, 2004 (No. 4) be now introduced and read for the first time. Is leave of the Assembly granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — First reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a first time.

The Speaker: — And when shall the Bill be read a second time? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, by leave of the Assembly, and under Rule 57(2) I move that the Bill be now read a second and third time.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. Moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 89, The Appropriation Act 2004 (No. 4) be now read a second time and a third time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Clerk Assistant (Committees): — Second and third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to and, by leave of the Assembly, the Bill read a second and third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — The Assembly will recess for approximately two or three minutes.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

(16:30)

The Speaker: — Order. I am advised that Her Honour is here for Royal Assent. I would ask all members to please rise.

ROYAL ASSENT

At 16:35 Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor entered the Chamber, took her seat upon the throne, and gave Royal Assent to the following Bills.

Her Honour: — Pray be seated.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly at the present session has passed several bills which, in the name of Assembly, I present to Your Honour and to which Bills I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Clerk: — Your Honour, the Bills are as follows:

Bill No. 2 - The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 9 - The Electrical Inspection Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 11 - The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 31 - The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004
 Bill No. 62 - The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 63 - The Statute Law Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)/projet de loi n° 63 Loi de modification législative de 2004 (n° 2)
 Bill No. 19 - The Land Titles Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 75 - The Crown Corporations Public Ownership Act
 Bill No. 77 - The Public Works and Services Act
 Bill No. 78 - The Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation Repeal Act
 Bill No. 72 - The Traffic Safety Act
 Bill No. 73 - The Traffic Safety Consequential Amendment Act, 2004/projet de loi n° 73 - Loi de 2004 sur les modifications corrélatives découlant de la loi intitulée The Traffic Safety Act
 Bill No. 76 - The Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 57 - The Irrigation Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 79 - The Wildlife Habitat Protection Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 68 - The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 58 - The Cities Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 85 - The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 83 - The Medical Profession Amendment Act, 2004
 Bill No. 84 - The Vital Statistics Amendment Act, 2004 (No. 2)/projet de loi n° 84 - Loi n° 2 de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les services de l'état civil.

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I assent to these Bills.

The Speaker: — May it please Your Honour, this Legislative Assembly has voted additional supplies required to enable the government to defray expenses of the public service.

In the name of the Assembly I present to Your Honour:

Bill No. 89 - The Appropriation Act, 2004 (No. 4)

to which Bill I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

Her Honour: — In Her Majesty's name, I thank the Legislative Assembly, accept their benevolence and assent to this Bill.

Her Honour retired from the Chamber at 16:40.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

MOTIONS FOR RETURNS (Debatable)

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Return No. 317

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for a Return No. 317.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast that the Assembly . . . or do we need a seconder? Is there a seconder for the motion?

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Southeast, seconded by the member for Melville-Saltcoats that an order of the Assembly do issue a return no. 317. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table an answer for question no. 317.

The Speaker: — I thank the member for his quick response. I should put the question before he delivers it. So is the Assembly ready for the question. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried, and return 317 has been submitted.

Return No. 318

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure whether a motion is required or whether it suffices for the minister or the government to undertake to issue an order for return. If it's the latter, I would just at this point indicate that with respect to items 318 through 335 inclusive, that we will undertake to provide the information to the Legislative Assembly and the people of Saskatchewan.

We would have provided the answers to these very detailed questions, Mr. Speaker, if we had been able to find the information quicker. I understand that the information which should serve to answer the questions has been located. It will take us a few days, perhaps a week, to sort through the information and to undertake to provide the answers for the questions.

I think it should be recognized that the questions that are under discussions are questions of great detail, going back a number of years, and the information was not readily accessible. But we do undertake, Mr. Speaker, to provide this information at a very early opportunity.

It doesn't suit our purposes to not have these questions answered. We think it helps the government. We think it helps the people of Saskatchewan to have these answers to these questions provided at a very early opportunity. And we undertake to do so certainly before the rules indicate that such answers should be provided.

So if it's in order, Mr. Speaker, I would undertake on behalf of the government to order a return for question 318 through 335 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Why is the member from Rosetown-Elrose on his feet.

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I move that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 318, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

(16:45)

The Speaker: — Thank you. I will accept the motion in a moment. I just wanted to clarify to the Assembly that now that we're under motions for returns (debatable) we ought to go through all of the motions. But we may be able to expedite it by grouping several of them.

It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 318. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Order. I've conducted the vote. Did the member want to speak to the motion . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . I failed to recognize the member at the time, but I've already declared the vote passed. We'd have to ask for leave if the member wishes to speak to the motion.

Is leave granted for the member to speak to this particular motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the motion on issuing a return for no. 318, a question that I asked near the beginning of this sitting. Mr. Speaker, the questions are concerning the SPUDCO issue and normally this question would be answered within five days. I had comments from the Government Whip that the answers were unable to be found; they had vanished into thin air. And he assured me that he would do all that he could to find the answers for me before the end of the session.

About a day or so ago, earlier, I believe it was yesterday, the Government Whip informed me that they were having trouble finding the answers and they were doing the best they could. But today he informed me that he thought perhaps they had found the answers, but he couldn't assure me that he had found the answers because they were in a box in Outlook and they had not yet had time to look in the box to see if even the answers were there.

Mr. Speaker, the concern that we have is that we have raised the issue around SPUDCO. There have been so many unanswered questions. We got assurance from the Premier of Saskatchewan, we got assurance from the Minister Responsible for the SaskWater Corporation that we would have answers in a very

timely fashion.

Now it's not our fault that they couldn't find the questions. It's not our fault that they didn't know that they had left . . . perhaps left, we don't even know for sure if they have left the answers in a box, unattended somewhere in Outlook.

And that is of real concern because, Mr. Speaker, once this House rises, once we adjourn — and that is expected in a few minutes — this House will not sit until likely middle of March, barring some unforeseen emergency or issue that might arise in the interim.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the . . . Under the rules of the House, government doesn't have to answer the question for 180 days, which would be near the end of a spring session. And that's a real concern because the people of my constituency, the constituency of Rosetown-Elrose, are particularly concerned about this issue. There are a number of people that have been hurt badly by the SPUDCO fiasco, hurt financially, hurt emotionally. They've asked that this House provide answers to the questions. There is a great concern that money was lost because potatoes may have been improperly identified.

And yet, Mr. Speaker, we know that there is a system in place that is administered both by the province of Saskatchewan and by our federal government that is supposed to assure us that proper documentation for the sale and movement of potatoes occurs, particularly when those potatoes move out of province. And particularly, Mr. Speaker, we would seek those assurances if there was some question as to the registration or future registration or continued registration or certification of a product.

So as you can understand, Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very concerned. And people of Saskatchewan, and particularly people in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency, are very concerned that they get these answers in a timely fashion. Almost no one in the Lucky Lake area is growing potatoes. There are many producers in the Lucky Lake area that know how to grow potatoes. There is equipment in the Lucky Lake area, but until some of these matters are cleared up, until confidence is restored in the system that this government is responsible for and that the Minister for SaskWater is responsible to uphold, it's unlikely that producers are going to sign contracts to get back into the potato industry. They'll have to employ their irrigation equipment growing other crops, even though potatoes because it's a rotational crop, you know, you just can't delay and delay that without serious financial concerns to your operation.

Mr. Speaker, questions that I asked regarding SaskWater and SPUDCO was whether they had received compensation from Monsanto for any of the genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes. Now it's difficult to understand, Mr. Speaker, why the answer to that question would be left in a box in Outlook. You know, it defies logic that that type of information would not be available to the minister responsible for SPUDCO. It's unfathomable that they wouldn't have been able to . . . you know, that they wouldn't have kept those records in a central location and have that information readily available.

Mr. Speaker, the other questions, some of them were in more

detail about the quantities. And I can understand that perhaps they wouldn't have all of the bills of lading and that sort of thing as to, you know, how many tonnes of potatoes were moved, whether it was bulk or whether it was packaged. I can understand, and I have some sympathy for the Government Whip in that regard. But when it comes to the GMO (genetically modified organism) potatoes, that they wouldn't even know whether they had gotten compensation from Monsanto, doesn't seem like the kind of information you'd tuck away in a box and leave it in who knows where — in an office somewhere, I presume, or maybe it was even a potato shed in Outlook, Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the other questions that we are dealing with include whether or not the potato packaging processing companies were informed by SaskWater and SPUDCO that they were buying genetically modified NewLeaf potatoes. Now again, this is information that should be at the minister's fingertips. This issue has been touched on, not just in this session of the legislature, but earlier. There was a question about whether or not SPUDCO was involved in this new generation of genetically modified potatoes.

This is not something that was sprung on the government; the issue has been raised in the past. And we would expect that the minister, that the NDP government would have done their homework and they would know where this information was. You would think that they, because we had discussed prior to the opening of this fall session that we would raise the issue of SPUDCO, you'd think they'd have their fingers on the information, that they would be ready to answer our questions — especially when the minister brags, and the Premier brags, and the Deputy Premier was bragging that they were doing to give us all the answers to all the questions we asked. Well, quite frankly, they didn't; they didn't do due diligence, Mr. Speaker. They didn't make sure they had their act together. They were making claims; they were doing some boasting and they aren't able to follow through. At least it seems like they're not able to follow through.

And in fact we're concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the answer might not come for another 180 days, which is unacceptable, as we know that plans for growing a new crop of potatoes have to occur in the very near future.

Another concern, Mr. Speaker, is that families are currently hurting, and currently left up in the air over this issue. And I think of the Dolman family. The Dolman family were bankrupted by the fact that SPUDCO contracted with them to grow this variety of potatoes and the bottom fell out of the market. They were assured by SPUDCO that there would be a sale for these potatoes. And SPUDCO pulled the rug out from under this family and they had to declare bankruptcy. There may even be continuing legal implications for the shortcomings of SPUDCO in this regard.

The Dolmans need answers. The Dolmans want to know whether this was a deliberate, a deliberate — premeditated, if you like — plan by SPUDCO, whether it was just lack of understanding, ignorance on the part of SPUDCO that they would allow this to happen. They want to know these answers and they have every right, Mr. Speaker, to know why they were given a bad bill of goods.

Mr. Speaker, there are other questions beside my questions that have been asked and we have not even had an assurance that they would be answered, and that includes questions that we have asked about Microgro. Microgro was in the riding that I represented prior to the last election, the riding of Rosetown-Biggar. Microgro was located in the community of Biggar, a greenhouse. And Microgro contracted with SPUDCO to grow new generation genetically modified potato seedlings. And they were given a long five-year contract and encouraged to go out and borrow money — in fact, I believe they borrowed money from SOCO (Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation), another arm of the provincial government — given the contract with SPUDCO, that they would have a long-term market for these potatoes. Well SPUDCO up and pulled the rug out from under them too, and they had to declare bankruptcy, Mr. Speaker.

These questions need to be asked. And we've said until this government can get up and give us clear answers that with clear evidence, we need a public inquiry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, we think maybe they don't have the answers. Maybe the answers aren't really in that box in Outlook. How do we know? How do we know on November 30, when we're about to rise in this place, whether there are answers, whether that box contains answers, or whether this is just another stalling tactic by the NDP to try to weasel out from answering the questions that they promised to answer.

The Minister of SaskWater is sitting over there, made a commitment to answer those questions. The Premier of Saskatchewan who has said he would come clean, and he has come short in the past in fully informing the province about SPUDCO, said he'd provide all of the answers in this sitting of the legislature.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we don't have the answers. We're not sure we're going to get them. Just the big promise that the answer might be in a box in Outlook is pretty shaky given the track record of the NDP, given the broken promises, the coming short on this issue time and time again.

Mr. Speaker, we need to know that the answers are assured. And, Mr. Speaker, we believe this is the clearest way and the most professional way that the NDP could provide those answers, is to call an independent public inquiry.

Now interestingly, federally, the federal Liberal government was involved in a bit of a scandal and it was just prior to an election. And so they called the public inquiry and it was pretty smart on their part. They got a public inquiry to kind of delay dealing with the issue until after the federal election. And right now that public inquiry is doing its work.

The NDP have an opportunity to do one better. They have the opportunity to call a public inquiry after an election, if they really sincerely want to get at the truth, at the bottom of the issue, if they really want to let Saskatchewan people know what happened — what happened with Con-Force.

Mr. Speaker, that was the company that supposedly the

provincial government had contracted with and given a 51 per cent share in these potato storage barns. Well, Mr. Speaker, we found out from the former minister responsible that he had been misleading the people of Saskatchewan and he actually had to rise in the House and apologize. I see that the former minister is intently following this debate. Must be his way of showing remorse for what he has done in the past.

But, Mr. Speaker, the government did not willingly, the NDP government did not willingly provide us with that information. They tried to withhold it. They tried to cover it up. They tried to minimize the truth. Just sort of like when you hit the minimize button on your computer, it just kind of disappears, they thought, if we just hit the minimize button, maybe this Con-Force issue will go away.

Well, Mr. Speaker, eventually the truth has a way of coming out and the truth came out about the fact that the government had no deal at all with Con-Force. In fact they were paying Con-Force additional money to manage these potato storage barns, let alone take a full ownership position in the potato storage facilities.

So, Mr. Speaker, the questions weren't answered then. They're not being answered now. This is the biggest financial scandal in Saskatchewan's history that's created by a government — \$35 million and growing, Mr. Speaker — untold legal costs, untold costs absorbed by the Department of Justice that aren't even made known to the public.

Mr. Speaker, this scandal is so long-standing that it's impacted the NDP over two elections. They had to withhold the truth about Con-Force before the 1999 election. And then before this last election in 2003, the Deputy Premier decided to insert himself in some jiggery-pokery politics and use or abuse, you might say, the justice system to raise a false issue during the campaign to somehow try to taint the Saskatchewan Party.

(17:00)

Totally unjustified. The judge laughed at the accusation, but nevertheless the Deputy Premier was able to, for one day, make this an issue in the election. It shouldn't have been an issue. He had no evidence; there was nothing to substantiate that. But again, Mr. Speaker, how will we know, how will we know why the Deputy Premier used such skulduggery unless we have a public inquiry to get to the bottom of the matter?

Mr. Speaker, there are thousands, hundreds of thousands of taxpayers in Saskatchewan that deserve an answer. More than deserve an answer, Mr. Speaker, they insist upon an answer to the questions that are still unanswered around the SPUDCO fiasco.

Mr. Speaker, we're led to believe that the answers are in a box — a box that we haven't seen, a box that the Whip hasn't seen, a box that he doesn't even know if there's anything in this box. Mr. Speaker, they don't know. They are telling me that they don't know what's in the box. And yet, Mr. Speaker, they're the ones that promised to give the answers in this sitting of the legislature. Where's the beef, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Where are the results that they promised? They keep promising over and over again — we're going to do this; we're going to do that; we're going to give you the lowest bundle of utility of rates. Well we still don't have the lowest bundle of utility rates. They had to give . . . They had to raise the rates and then give a little rebate back on the SaskTel bill, and they still haven't got the lowest rates.

Now they expect us to believe that some day they'll give us the answers to the SPUDCO affair even though they've been dragging their feet for months and months, in fact, years and years. And if we don't get this answer soon, it'll go into decades and decades.

And, Mr. Speaker, they smile about it. I see the deputy Whip . . . the Government Whip. He's smiling; he thinks it's funny. Well I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, the families that were hurt in Lucky Lake don't think it's funny. The families that lost money on their homes, that had to mortgage, remortgage their farms to try to survive — and in fact some didn't survive and have had to end their business involvements in the potato industry here in Saskatchewan — don't think it's very funny. And, Mr. Speaker, I think they'd be pretty disappointed if we just took the government's word that they have this information in a box somewhere in Outlook, a box that they haven't even looked into and haven't gone through.

Mr. Speaker, when potatoes are transported outside the province of Saskatchewan, they are required to either have a certificate for bulk movement or a ministerial exemption from the federal Minister of Agriculture. You're not allowed to move potatoes outside of Saskatchewan unless you have these two documents. Mr. Speaker, SPUDCO should know whether they had those documents. It shouldn't be, if it's in the box, Mr. Speaker; it should be, here's the evidence that we either complied with the rules or we didn't comply with the rules.

What kind of incompetent government doesn't even know weeks after they were asked whether they complied with the law of the land, whether in fact they had that bulk movement certificate or not? Or whether they had the ministerial exemption or not? I asked the Minister Responsible for SaskWater just a couple of weeks ago — he was sitting right in that chair — and I said to this minister, will you give us the information, and he said, yes we will give you the information tomorrow. He said tomorrow. He didn't give us the answer tomorrow.

I asked him about an export of potatoes from Saskatchewan to Alberta. I asked him for the ministerial exemption. Do you know what I got? Do you know what I got, Mr. Speaker? I got an invoice — not a ministerial exemption — an invoice from a shipment to Manitoba. I asked for the ministerial exemption on a sale of potatoes to Alberta, and the Minister Responsible for SaskWater gives me an invoice on a sale of potatoes to Manitoba.

And he said, here's the answer. He says, you've got your answer. Well I didn't get my answer; I got nothing close to the answer, Mr. Speaker. And now we're supposed to believe that in a box in Outlook all the answers to these questions — the issue for return for no. 318; also the issue for return for no. 319; questions asked by my colleague, the MLA (Member of the

Legislative Assembly) for Kindersley; questions asked by my colleague, the MLA for Weyburn-Big Muddy; questions about SPUDCO; questions that need to be answered — no answers are forthcoming. No certainty. All the Government Whip can do is say, well we think the answers might be in a box, and if they are, we'll let you know as soon as we go through this box. We've got to blow the dust off; we've got to go through this box.

Well what if the answers aren't in the box and the NDP again have failed to keep their commitment to give the answers? They've already failed, that we're not getting the answers in this session of the legislature. They may fail completely. We may not know the answers when we reconvene this House in March.

The NDP just say whatever it takes at the time to try to get by till tomorrow. You know, if we can just stall the Sask Party for another day. You know, if we can just . . . We'll just feed them this line; hopefully that, you know, we'll get through tomorrow, and then we'll try and think of something else to get through the next day. And maybe we can get through the next week, and hopefully they'll forget, Mr. Speaker.

Well there's 35 million really good reasons why we shouldn't forget about SPUDCO — 35 millions that hurt the taxpayers of Saskatchewan; 35 million reasons that caused a lot of Saskatchewan people, hardworking people, hardworking families, to lose everything in Saskatchewan; 35 million reasons that hurt equipment dealers that sold potato equipment in Saskatchewan; 35 million reasons that the banks and other investors and lenders don't trust the Government of Saskatchewan and fear to become involved in this province, a fear that has hampered economic development and economic growth in this province.

This is serious stuff, Mr. Speaker. This is not a game of, you know, can we get this fall session done in two weeks and go home and have a nice Christmas? Mr. Speaker, the people that lost everything haven't had a nice Christmas for a long time. This is not a joke. This is serious business. This is the livelihood of Saskatchewan people. This is an industry that the NDP practically ruined because SPUDCO didn't know what they were doing and apparently didn't keep a record of what they weren't doing very well, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they heckle. They heckle. They think this isn't serious. It's not serious to them. We know it's not serious to them because there's been no answers coming from the NDP. They have tried to sidestep this issue. They have hoped that, in time, people would forget about it. That's what I think they've been spinning the media — oh SPUDCO, you know, it's over and done with.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not over and done with. There's still an industry that's handicapped because of SPUDCO. There are still people, Mr. Speaker, there are still people, Mr. Speaker, who are suffering financially or having trouble feeding themselves. And we heard about food banks earlier today, Mr. Speaker. Well there's a reason why there are more people dependent upon a food bank. It's because the NDP have been destroying their livelihood, as they did to the people in Lucky Lake.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP have showed an horrendous lack of respect for the people of Saskatchewan, you know, particularly a lack of respect for those who make their living in agriculture. And I refer you to court evidence that indicated, or evidence following the trial, the trial that they settled out of court, or the case they settled out of court, when it was reported that NDP lawyers, this firm of Olive Waller Zinkhan & Waller, called farmers dumb.

Mr. Speaker, they said, you know, we beat those dumb farmers with GRIP (gross revenue insurance program). We're going to beat those dumb farmers with the SPUDCO issue as well. That's the NDP attitude, Mr. Speaker — lack of respect for people who work hard, who are honest, who trusted their government and were betrayed by their NDP government, Mr. Speaker. This is a serious matter, and it's not one that the NDP members should be heckling about. It's one that they should be hanging their heads in shame over because of the damage they have done to the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, the world is looking at Saskatchewan. The world is wondering, can we do business in this province? It's time to turn over a new leaf. You know, it's funny. These potatoes were called NewLeaf potatoes, if I'm not mistaken.

Well it's time Saskatchewan turned over a new leaf. It's time Saskatchewan had a government that was honest. It's time to have a government that squares with the people of Saskatchewan. That's what the Sask Party is committed to, and that's what the member for Rosetown-Elrose is committed to. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Once again, members, I would ask . . . We have voted on the motion, and I would ask if the member would ask for leave to speak to the motion or wait till the next motion and . . . So the order, return for 318 has been ordered.

I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Return No. 319

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, that an order of Assembly do issue a return for no. 319.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return no. 319. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a general comment first of all with respect to the answering of written questions. Just so that the Assembly is aware that when I go on to make certain undertakings or provide certain undertakings with respect to questions, that we do have a record

of providing answers to written questions. That's not always been the case in the Legislative Assembly in Saskatchewan, that governments have undertaken to do that or to do that in a timely fashion.

But let me just say, Mr. Speaker, that in the twenty-fourth legislature, in the second session, 2001 and '02, 241 questions were asked and 21 were left unanswered. All others were answered. 2002-03, the third session, 496 questions were asked. Seven were negatived because they were not questions that could be answered; they were more opinions. And all others were answered, either on the day they were called in the House, converted to a return, or ordered to be answered at a later date.

In 2003-04, 793 questions were asked, and all were answered. In 2004-05 — the first session, Mr. Speaker, and we are currently in that session — we're now up to question 887, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

And now we get to the questions that are the subject of debate before the Legislative Assembly. The rules state, Mr. Speaker, that when the question cannot be answered within a certain period of time, because it's not always possible, logistically possible, to answer a question within a period of time, that then the government has five days in which to answer that question. If they can't do it, the government can then order that question be converted. Sometimes the question can't be provided because the answer is constructed in a way that means it's impossible to provide the answer.

But we also can undertake to issue an order for return, which according to the rules of the Assembly, Mr. Speaker, and I refer to rule No. 46(3):

An Order of the Assembly for a return must be brought down within one hundred and eighty calendar days.

We undertake, Mr. Speaker, with respect to the items that are on the agenda and that are outstanding . . . and that includes the previous one that we voted off. It includes this specific motion, so it includes items 318 through 335 and also including the item which was converted today, which is no. 887. That is opposed to bringing the answer down within 180 calendar days, we undertake to provide the answer within 21 days, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — On the motion moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose, seconded by the member for Kelvington-Wadena, that an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 319.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

Returns Nos. 320 — 335

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave of the Assembly to move the returns nos. 320 through 335 inclusive, seconded by the member from Cut Knife-Turtleford for each of the returns.

(17:15)

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to combine all returns, to move a motion regarding returns 320 through to 335. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. It has been moved then by the member for Kindersley seconded by the member for Cut Knife-Turtleford:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for returns nos. 320 through to 335 inclusive.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. These returns have been ordered.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Return No. 336

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask leave to move order of the Assembly return no. 336 for question no. 887.

The Speaker: — The member has requested leave to move an order for return for no. 336. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy.

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move seconded by the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs:

To move an order of the Assembly for return no. 336.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Weyburn-Big Muddy, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs:

That an order of the Assembly do issue for return no. 336.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried; 336 is ordered.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I ask for leave to move a motion with respect to the substitution of members on committee.

The Speaker: — The Government House Leader has requested leave to make a motion with respect to substitution of members on committees. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. I recognize the Government House Leader.

MOTIONS

Substitutions on Committees

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the name of Mark Wartman be substituted for the name of Maynard Sonntag on the Crown and Central Agencies Committee.

Seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the name of Mark Wartman be substituted for the name of Maynard Sonntag on the Crown and Central Agencies Committee.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the name of Maynard Sonntag be substituted for the name of Mark Wartman on the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee.

Seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Nutana:

That the name of Maynard Sonntag be substituted for the name of Mark Wartman on the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. I recognize the Government House Leader.

House Adjournment

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, I plan in a few moments to move a motion with respect to adjournment. I wonder if before that, Mr. Speaker, I just might make a couple of comments.

And one is to express my appreciation for the work of the Opposition House Leader and members of his staff who have facilitated the work of this session, have allowed the legislation to proceed in an orderly fashion, and also — this was totally unexpected when we talked about the session — that we would also be dealing with a number of supplementary estimates. That was a surprise to me, as it was to the members of the opposition. And I appreciate the fact that they took this in stride and did the work that is required of members of the Assembly to consider these estimates in committee, along with the legislation.

And so I want to congratulate all the members of the Assembly who are involved in the committee work for the work that they have done during the course of these last 12 sitting days. I think it fair to say that the people of Saskatchewan are getting good value for their money when it comes to their Member of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker. So I want to express my appreciation for all Members of the Legislative Assembly and again particularly recognize the co-operation of the Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Speaker, too, before we adjourn, I want the public to know and the people to know, the members of the Assembly to know that our thoughts are with the member for Cypress Hills. He has experienced a bit of a health setback and all of us are concerned for his health. And we hope that when we reconvene in the spring that he will be with us.

So too, Mr. Speaker, there are other members of the Assembly that may have health issues and our hearts go out to them, and our best hopes and our prayers go out to them and we wish them well and we look forward to seeing them on our return in the spring, Mr. Speaker.

Finally, very briefly to thank you and the Clerk's office and all those who make it possible for us to deal with the business that's brought before us, we say a hearty thank you for all that you do to support us in our roles as Members of the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

And having said that, I wish all the members and all the staff all the best in the coming weeks. I never like to talk about Christmas before the month of December and here we are, the last day of November, but I hope, too, that everyone has a good holiday season and that their Christmas and New Year's are joyful ones.

And having said that, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Melfort:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of the sitting day it shall stand adjourned to the date and the time set by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and that Mr. Speaker shall give each member seven clear days notice, if possible, of such date and time.

I move, seconded by the member for Melfort, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and second the motion by the Government House Leader in regard to adjourning this fall session.

Mr. Speaker, I think there's a couple of items for note, very briefly, that are important for us to recognize. This is the first fall session that we've had as part of a transition to a fall and spring calendar. It is transitory in that there is the transition period of time that we're going to have to move towards the permanent spring and fall calendar, and so it does create its challenges, if you like, Mr. Speaker, in order to bring forward the appropriate items of House business in a way that meets the proper balance of scrutiny.

Mr. Speaker, the official opposition has been very pleased to participate in this fall session. We've called for these sessions over the years and we think it is a very definite improvement. And in acknowledging that, I certainly would like to acknowledge the Government House Leader and his staff in terms of being able to work with the government in terms of making sure that all of the issues, both for the government and the opposition, are clearly articulated, and as a result the people of Saskatchewan are better served by their legislators.

Mr. Speaker, recognizing that we are approaching a very special and holy season of Christmas and the new year, I certainly want to join with the Opposition House Leader in wishing the member from Cypress Hills the very, very best of the season, and that he has a complete and speedy recovery from his health challenges. I know that he will take the time to be with his family and friends. And not only our best wishes with him, Mr. Speaker, but I'm sure I can say, on behalf of the Assembly, that our prayers are with him as well.

I certainly join with the Government House Leader in also wishing everyone good health and good fortune in the new year. And I would strongly encourage each of us to take the time that we can to be with our family and friends and those dear to us because sometimes, when we have health challenges, it's what's needed in order to make us be more sensitive of the preciousness of our family and friends and to have as much time as we can in their company.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank you and all the members of the Legislative Assembly and to wish everyone a very merry and blessed Christmas.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Melfort:

That when this Assembly adjourns at the end of the sitting

day, it shall stand adjourned to the date and to the time set by Mr. Speaker upon the request of the government, and that Mr. Speaker shall give each member seven clear days notice, if possible, of such date and time.

Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until the call of the Chair. I wish everyone good health and a pleasant holiday season.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:26.

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Provincial Secretary

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford
Minister of Community Resources and Employment
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues
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Hon. D. Forbes
Minister of Environment
Minister Responsible for the Office of Energy Conservation

Hon. D. Higgins
Minister of Labour
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Hon. J. Nilson
Minister of Health
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. P. Prebble
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Hon. F. Quennell
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. C. Serby
Deputy Premier
Minister of Rural Revitalization

Hon. M. Sonntag
Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Hon. L. Taylor
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. A. Thomson
Minister of Learning
Minister Responsible for Information Technology

Hon. H. Van Mulligen
Minister of Finance

Hon. M. Wartman
Minister of Agriculture and Food