



SECOND SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

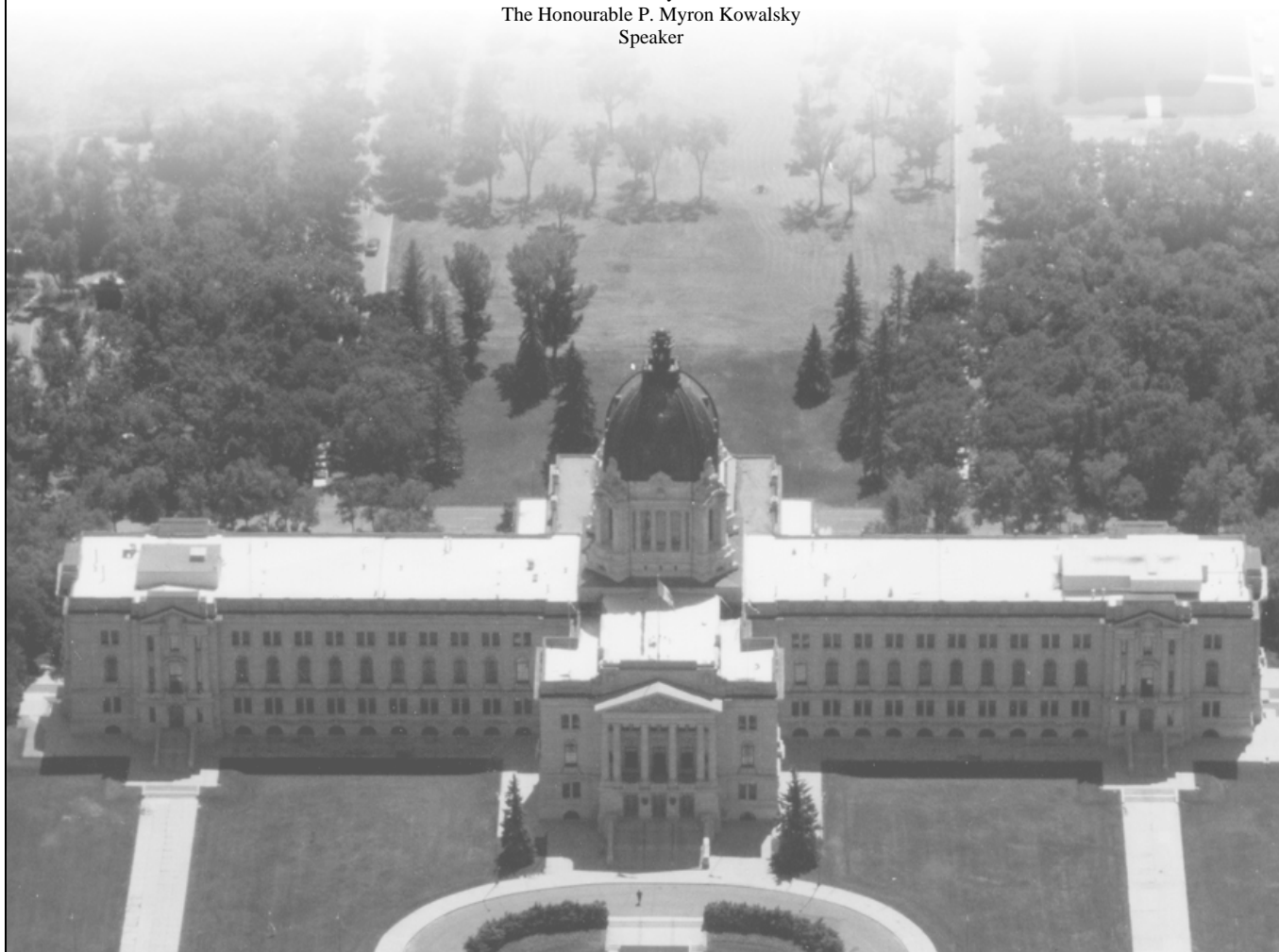
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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, Hon. Graham	NDP	Saskatoon Sutherland
Allchurch, Denis	SP	Rosthern-Shellbrook
Atkinson, Hon. Pat	NDP	Saskatoon Nutana
Beatty, Hon. Joan	NDP	Cumberland
Belanger, Hon. Buckley	NDP	Athabasca
Bjornrud, 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, 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, Hon. 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, Hon. 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, 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, Hon. Kevin	NDP	Regina Dewdney
Vacant		Weyburn-Big Muddy

[The Assembly met at 13:30.]

[Prayers]

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure this afternoon to stand in this Assembly to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens across the province of Saskatchewan. And I read the prayer, Mr. Speaker. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Mr. Speaker, I present a petition signed by a number of residents from the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — The member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of individuals around the community concerned about inequity in employee pensions and benefits. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Today's petition is signed by individuals from various communities around the province of Saskatchewan. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition regarding pension and benefits of provincial employees that have been long overdue in being recognized by this provincial government. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

This petition is signed by, again, people from across the province. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

I so submit.

The Speaker: — The member for Canora-Pelly.

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition to present on behalf of well over 8,000 pensioners and their spouses. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signators today are from the city of Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise on behalf of residents of the province concerned with the issue of provincial employee pensions and benefits. 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 initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Mr. Speaker, all the petitioners today on behalf of whom I rise are from the city of Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to rise on behalf of people who are concerned about the government's failure to meet its commitment to provide a fully funded pension plan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause this government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The people who have signed this petition are from Regina and Moose Jaw. I so present on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition requesting measures to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits. This petition is signed by people who are concerned that the province of Saskatchewan has failed to meet its commitment to provide a funded pension plan for employees under The Public Service Superannuation Act. The prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from the Queen City of Regina, and I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The member for Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

The signators, Mr. Speaker, are all from the city of Regina.

The Speaker: — The member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens aggrieved by the former government employees' pension plan. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals that appear to be all from the community of Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition regarding provincial employee pensions and benefits. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

And on behalf of the signatures, I so present . . . people from the province of Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: — Member for Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too am pleased to rise this afternoon and on behalf of a group of our seniors present the following petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

The Speaker: — The member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of retired civil servants. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the city of Regina. And I'm pleased to be able to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition today with retirees that are disappointed that the province of Saskatchewan has failed to meet its commitment to provide a funded pension plan:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are all from the great city of Regina. And I'm pleased to present it on their behalf.

The Speaker: — The member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise again today to present a petition from citizens concerned about the lack of government funding for the cancer drug Avastin. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

Signed by citizens from Osler and Saskatoon and district. I so present.

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to

rise today with a petition on behalf of retired civil servants from across Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan is the only province without a legislated cost-of-living increase for retired civil servants. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial pensions and benefits.

The petitioners today are from the constituencies of Saskatoon Silver Springs, Saskatoon Sutherland, Saskatoon Nutana, and Regina South. I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a petition today from citizens that are very, very concerned about the NDP's [New Democratic Party] two tiered health system specifically related to the cancer drug Avastin, where if you've got the money, you can get it. And the 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 fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — Member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's two-tier health care. 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 fully fund the cancer drug Avastin.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition are from Martensville and Saskatoon. I so present.

The Speaker: — Member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to read a petition from concerned citizens, concerned with the parity of provincial government employee pension benefits. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employees' pensions and benefits.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, it is signed by the good people of Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Arm River-Watrous.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens opposed to the reductions of services to Imperial health centre:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Imperial health centre be maintained at its current level of service at a minimum with 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Imperial area and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

This petition is signed by the good citizens from Imperial, Simpson, Liberty, and Holdfast. I so present.

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Northwest.

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour and privilege to rise today and present a petition that the province of Saskatchewan has failed to meet its commitment to provide a funded pension plan for employees under The Public Service Superannuation Act. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to rise in the House today to present a petition regarding pension benefits payable to provincial employees who have retired. This petition deals with pensioners who have had during their working career regularly deducted money from their employee paycheques to go into this pension plan. I will read the prayer for relief:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

This petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by citizens from Regina. I so present.

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Carrot River Valley.

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf

of citizens of the province who are concerned that the government has failed to meet its commitment to provide a funded pension plan for employees under The Public Service Superannuation Act. And the prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to initiate measures as required to bring parity to all provincial employee pensions and benefits.

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

Mr. Speaker, signed by citizens who I am pretty sure are also concerned that Highway 5 is way too narrow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 14 are hereby read and received as an addition to a previously tabled petition being sessional paper no. 639.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Standing Committee on House Services

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on House Services to report that it has considered certain estimates and to present its sixth report. I move, seconded by the hon. member for Arm River-Watrous:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member from Moose Jaw North, seconded by the member Arm River-Watrous:

That the sixth report of the Standing Committee on House Services be now concurred in.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

[13:45]

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Relations.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, a few years ago the Governor of Montana and the Premier of Saskatchewan signed an

intergovernmental accord in recognition that these are two jurisdictions that have a common heritage and that these are two jurisdictions that share one corner of the globe and therefore subject to similar challenges and opportunities.

Yesterday and today we were pleased to receive a delegation of legislative officials and also administrative officials from the state of Montana in accordance with that accord. And I should like to introduce to you . . . And some of my colleagues will also be introducing some of the legislative officials that are here, but I would like to start by introducing to you — and he's seated behind the bar — Lieutenant Governor John Bohlinger from Montana state and if John could stand give us a wave.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Seated beside Lieutenant Governor Bohlinger is Senator Sam Kitzenberg from Glasgow and if he could give us a wave.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Now there are some other legislative officials who will be introduced shortly, but I want to take this opportunity while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, to recognize some administrative officials that are here with us. And they're seated in your gallery.

First there's Mr. Jim Lynch, the director of Montana Department of Transportation.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Dan McGowan, the administrator of disaster and emergency services, Department of Military Affairs, Montana state.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Tom Kaiserski. He's an economic development specialist with the Office of the Governor of Montana.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Will Hammerquist, a policy advisor to the Lieutenant Governor.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Mark Bison, bureau chief, international trade and relations, Department of Commerce.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Marc Boucher, Canadian Consul in Denver.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Ms. Shirley Ball who is the honorary Canadian Consul designee for Montana.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — And we're very pleased to welcome Ms. Betty Rice who is the press secretary, education and cultural affairs, the Consulate of the United States of America in Calgary. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I understand that some of my colleagues will also be introducing other members of the delegation. Can I just say in closing that we in Saskatchewan look forward to visiting Helena, Montana and to carrying on this dialogue and this friendship that has been developed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly another member of the delegation from the great state of Montana, Representative Hal Jacobson, seated behind the bar on our side here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Wascana Plains.

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, seated behind our bar, the Democrat representative of Havre House district in Montana, John Musgrove.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Wood River.

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly I would like to introduce Representative Wayne Stahl who is sitting behind . . . standing behind the bar now, on our side. Wayne is from Saco, Montana which is very near to where I live.

And I share an awful lot of commonalities with Wayne. He was United States military West Point member. He served as Saco town council, mayor of Saco, and Phillips County commissioner. Representative Stahl currently holds House standing committee assignments on business and labour, federal regulations, energy and telecommunications and is Vice-Chair of local government. I'd ask all members to please welcome Wayne to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Nutana.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the government, I want to introduce to the Assembly galleries full of retired former public servants.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that they got here very early. I think they were here at about 12:30 trying to get into the galleries. And I want to thank the Sergeant-at-Arms and the commissionaires for letting people into the galleries early, Mr. Speaker. I know that these public servants are here to inform the Assembly of some of their issues, and I'm looking forward to the discussion. And on behalf of the government, I'd like to welcome all of you to the Assembly this afternoon.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you and to all members of the Assembly, I would like to recognize over 200 individuals that are retired civil servants in the province of Saskatchewan, people that have made a tremendous contribution to our province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to single out one individual, Mr. Alf Zimmerman. He's a dedicated and focused individual who I've had the pleasure with working with. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd ask them to all stand but there might be a minor tremor. But Mr. Zimmerman was the first person to call me after I became the Finance critic. And I just want to thank him for his tenacity and for bringing a large group to their legislature today. This group is looking for fairness and equity, and we hope that they are satisfied with the results that they see at their legislature today.

Again to all members please help me in welcoming them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is the 35th anniversary of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

And I see in your gallery today is Marilyn Braun-Pollon, the director of provincial affairs for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and also M.J. Nelitz, the member services councillor for the CFIB [Canadian Federation of Independent Business] in Saskatchewan. And I'd like to welcome them here today.

And I'd like to say to you and through you to the House, Mr. Speaker, how diligent this organization really is in surveying its 5,200 members in our province and letting us know what the small-business community is saying and what the entrepreneurial community is saying.

And I know that all members will join in congratulating the CFIB on their 35th anniversary and welcoming these individuals here today.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition, I would too like to join the minister in

welcoming the CFIB individuals to their Legislative Assembly. Thirty-five years, it's quite an accomplishment.

And I would like to thank them for the work that they do and the contribution that they make to our province, especially the contribution that they've recently made to the Vicq commission report — I had a chance to meet with them on numerous occasions — and also the work that they do prior to each and every budget here in the province. I think the government would agree that the work that they do helps us do our job as legislators.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, I ask all members to join in welcoming the members of the CFIB to their legislature.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Mr. McCall: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to a group seated in the west gallery. They are a group of 16 students from Thomson School. They're accompanied by their teachers, Heather Walton and Darcia Cunningham. If we could get everybody to give us a wave from Thomson there — yes, there they are, very energetic group.

Mr. Speaker, Thomson, in addition to being one of the most historic and oldest schools in the city of Regina, is also one of the most diverse. And certainly their school motto is "Where the children of the world come to learn." And we know that the teachers and the staff do a good job of making sure those students come from around the world to get that good education.

I look forward to meeting with them later on, Mr. Speaker. And I'd invite all members to join with me in welcoming them to their legislature. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member from Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this afternoon it is a pleasure for me to introduce 15 grade 5 students from Grenfell Elementary Community School. And seeing as the galleries are quite full, actually the students are basically up at the top on the east gallery and some down the side. And I certainly want to extend a welcome to Constance MacKenzie, her grade 5 students from Grenfell Elementary School.

I had the privilege of meeting with them just prior to the opening of session, and I'm looking forward, Mr. Speaker, in probably about 3, 4 weeks time to meeting with the students again in their classroom. But a special welcome to the students from Grenfell Elementary School. Thank you.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Regina Northeast.

Mr. Harper: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly, seated in the west gallery, a group of 22 grade 4 students from Henry Braun School in my constituency. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Donna Raiter, and chaperons, Mrs. Holly Handzuik and Mrs. Lauri Burkowski.

This group has just arrived, and they're going to take in part of question period, and then they're going to tour the legislature. And then we're going to meet on the great stairs for pictures, and after that we'll have some refreshments.

So I ask all of my colleagues to give this group of our future leaders of Saskatchewan a very warm welcome.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Arm River-Watrous.

Holding Back Rural Businesses

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I arise in the House today to talk about a business owner in my constituency who recently received a quote from SaskTel. This gentleman simply wanted to add a second line to his existing phone line. This business simply wanted to have what all businesses want — to be competitive by having all the communication technology available. But once again this NDP government decided to hold back rural businesses that want to succeed in Saskatchewan.

This business owner was given an estimate of over \$5,000 from SaskTel for just installing a second line. And not only that, Mr. Speaker, he even asked, can he pay it over several months? And SaskTel insisted that it be paid up front, \$5,000 in one month, which is a shame. And they wonder why there's no businesses in rural Saskatchewan.

I have had several other complaints about other companies wanting to install lines — also from SaskPower infrastructure, SaskEnergy — of huge, huge infrastructure costs being applied to these businesses in rural Saskatchewan. If this was a house owner in Regina or Saskatoon or a major city, \$500 is all they would pay for a second line. So you wonder why businesses aren't flourishing in rural Saskatchewan. This is all the proof that you need is . . . why rural Saskatchewan is not growing under this present NDP government.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Canadian Federation of Independent Business Celebrates 35 Years

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, 35 years ago John Bulloch, convinced of the need for an organization to provide a big voice for small business, launched the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. Over the years, the CFIB's

multi-dimensional approach of turning research into intensive action through media campaigns and political activity has proven to be very effective, and the organization has been very successful. Since 1971 Mr. Bullock's non-partisan, not-for-profit political action organization has grown to represent over 100,000 members nationally, including some 5,200 right here in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that small businesses are an economic driving force in Saskatchewan. With 98 per cent of all firms in the province employing less than 50 workers each, it's clear that small business is vital to the health of the provincial economy — which is why we are pleased to have the CFIB as part of the budget consultation process and even more pleased to have received a letter from CFIB's Saskatchewan director of provincial affairs, Marilyn Braun-Pollon, commending the government for implementing the recommendations to the business tax committee and for providing a provincial tax credit for workers who provide their own tools and for taking measures to address the shortage of qualified labour.

Mr. Speaker, over the last three and a half decades, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been an advocate for business and the entrepreneurial spirit in this country. I ask all members to join me in congratulating the CFIB on their 35th anniversary. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:00]

The Speaker: — The member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Highway Conditions in Kelvington Area

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the frustrating parts of being an opposition MLA [Member of the Legislative Assembly] — other than waiting for this tired, old, arrogant government to call an election — is trying to get the ministers to truly understand the issues around that affect our people.

My example today is highways. I recently received a note from a constituent regarding Highway No. 49. She writes:

Just to let you know about good old 49, when the department patches three holes, there's five more left right beside them. We've had two wheel alignments this spring, and we're off to Saskatoon where we'll have to get another one after travelling 49. We had to transfer our prescriptions to Preeceville from Kelvington like others have. The road conditions are hurting businesses in Kelvington, thanks to the government of the day. I heard someone make this statement the other day. We've got some kind of road from Okla to Kelvington, all red signs. What do I do? No green signs so when do I go?

We've had trees planted in some of the holes. Thank God, at least we know where the deep ones are. A work crew from communities are in the planning to fill the holes that are 8 to 12 inches deep. We love and care for our neighbours, and we do not want to attend their funerals.

Please help us in any way you can. We need a road. I wonder if the Premier is promoting the words, God helps them that helps themselves.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister would like to respond to this note. Kelvington-Wadena constituency is part of Saskatchewan, and we do pay taxes.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

Community Works Together to Combat Fire at Debden

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the strength of our rural communities is never more evident than in times of adversity, and this was certainly demonstrated yesterday in Debden, a community in my constituency of Saskatchewan Rivers.

Yesterday morning a fire broke out in a chemical storage building just south of Debden at Greenspring Ag Services, owned and operated by Denis Lafond. Denis is an active community leader whose business serves many farmers in the region. Within a very short time, the community mobilized with the local fire department, joined by firefighters from neighbouring communities. Because it was a chemical fire, the RM [rural municipality] of Canwood declared a state of local emergency, and evacuations were carried out of rural residents downwind. Highway 55 was closed by the RCMP [Royal Canadian Mounted Police].

The town of Debden also declared a state of local emergency and prepared for a possible evacuation, setting up an operation site in the town hall and a reception area in the church at Victoire, 15 kilometres to the west. At the school, Principal Tetreault and her staff kept the students indoors. Volunteers provided lunches, and school buses were lined up in case of an evacuation call. Thankfully this never became necessary.

Mr. Speaker, there is a collective sense of both relief and sadness in Debden today — relief because a dangerous situation has been averted with no harm or injury, sadness at the loss of a valuable local business. But, Mr. Speaker, I am sure there is also pride. Mr. Speaker, this fire brought many people together in common cause: numerous municipal and provincial officials, the RCMP, firefighters, school and health officials, and of course the good people of Debden.

Mr. Speaker, I ask members to join me in thanking all of those who joined in this collective effort and especially to commend the strength and spirit of the people of Debden. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

Cancelled Sale of Grain Hopper Cars

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on May 4 of this year, federal Transport minister, Lawrence Cannon, announced that he was cancelling the sale of 12,000 grain

hopper cars to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition.

His decision, Mr. Speaker, leaves a number of questions that Saskatchewan farmers need answers to. Questions like, what will be done to recover the \$30 million per year overcharge that the railways collected for hopper car maintenance? Will the continued government ownership of hopper cars ensure prairie farmers stable freight rates?

Who will ensure that railways actually maintain the cars? What pressures will be brought to bear to ensure that some of this maintenance is done in Saskatchewan in communities such as Ogema and Melville? What is the plan to replace the hopper cars? And who will pay for them? How does government ownership of hopper cars empower Saskatchewan producers in the marketplace?

Grain and oilseed producers, Mr. Speaker, are facing a crisis and need answers to these important questions. The Leader of the Opposition, the member from Swift Current, raised these very important questions with Minister Cannon in Ottawa last week, Mr. Speaker. We in the Saskatchewan Party and farmers of this province are looking for answers, Mr. Speaker, but there's another question. Where is this NDP government on this important issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Meadow Lake.

Graduate Tobacco-Free Challenge

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the graduation season, I'm looking forward to being part of a very special ceremony. Later this month, I will be presenting certificates and awards to the graduating class of actually the Goodsoil Central School in my hometown in recognition of their successful completion of the graduate tobacco-free challenge.

Mr. Speaker, smoking is the single biggest cause of disease and premature death in Canada. Encouraging our youth to be tobacco-free is an important step to ensuring that people of Saskatchewan live healthy, productive lives.

In November, in response to the harmful effects that smoking continues to have on Saskatchewan youth, the Minister of Healthy Living Services issued a challenge to all Saskatchewan grade 12 students to graduate tobacco-free. A total of 17 graduating classes across the province have registered as smoke-free classes in response to the minister's challenge. Each student of each class will receive a certificate of completion and a reward.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to invite all members to join me in commending the graduating class of the Goodsoil Central School, and all of the classes that participated, for meeting the graduate tobacco-free challenge. The students who made a commitment, who helped others to quit or refrain from smoking, are truly deserving of our congratulations and recognition. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Cannington.

Upcoming Provincial By-Election

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've recently had a chance to see a brochure for the NDP candidate in Weyburn-Big Muddy. The brochure asked the question, shouldn't we be represented by someone who actually lives here? Well that's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. Maybe someone could ask the same question of the Premier, the member for Saskatoon Riversdale, who actually lives a couple of hundred kilometres away in Moose Jaw.

And speaking of the Premier, I notice he is completely missing from the NDP brochure. No picture of the Premier. His name is never even mentioned. It's like he doesn't exist. It's quite something. The NDP are so totally embarrassed of their own leader that they leave him completely out of their brochure.

The funny thing is the brochure does mention the Minister of Finance by name, understandable when he gets 12 people out to his meeting compared to the Premier's supper that couldn't sell any tickets.

Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, the Saskatchewan Party is proud of our leader. And the people of Weyburn-Big Muddy will be seeing a lot of our leader during the upcoming provincial by-election as soon as the Premier calls it. Go ahead and call it.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Disclosure of Financial Irregularities

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This morning at the Public Accounts Committee meeting the deputy minister of Community Resources and Employment reported three new instances of financial irregularities within that department.

The first case involves a contractor with Saskatchewan Housing Authority and rent going missing to the tune of more than \$10,000. Mr. Speaker, the second case involves the Saskatchewan Housing Authority and irregularities regarding an employee expense account involving more than \$1,200. The third case involves a child and family services operation with the Yorkton Tribal Council, and no amount was released for this irregularity.

Mr. Speaker, all these three instances apparently have been reported to the police. Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this Assembly, would the Premier care to tell this Assembly why these cases were not disclosed to the public, to the taxpayers, in this Assembly or any other forum prior to today?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When this Minister of Finance put out rules, he put out rules for every department, Mr. Speaker. And we intend to follow these rules in every department.

I would point out, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that when we have allegations, it is important that we take the due time and the process to ensure that we do everything in our power to make sure that we have a thorough investigation. And part of being thorough in this investigation, Mr. Speaker, is to never assume guilt and always make sure that we cover our bases in terms of investigating all these matters. That member knows very well when you have an allegation, it takes time to investigate.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to follow these rules set out by our Minister of Finance. This government is accountable. We have put the procedures very publicly in terms of what comes out and what is being said when. The rules are there for all of us to follow. We will follow those rules.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, if we're going to take the minister at his word that they're going to find out the facts first and then decide whether to release it or not, why . . . It's our understanding that two of the three, two of the three cases involve employees being terminated by this government.

So then the question to the minister is this: if they're going to let the process unfold, why were two terminated? That's the first question. The second one, while I'm on my feet quickly, Mr. Speaker, is why didn't the minister, why hasn't the Premier then reported to the public that two people have been terminated in three financial irregularities within that department?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the leader of the liquor party crowd, I want to point out this very important thing . . .

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — What's pretty darn important . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. Order please. Order please. Several times I've had to intervene on this issue, and that is to require members to refer, when they're referring to another member, to refer only by their title. And I would ask the member before he proceeds just to withdraw that remark. Order please. Order please. Withdraw the remark, and then to continue.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What's important, Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order please. I'd ask the minister to first of all withdraw the remark before he proceeds.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw the comment.

Mr. Speaker, what's really important to us is that when the Minister of Finance set out these rules . . . Again as I stressed, the rules were for absolutely every department to follow. And part of the rule said that it's really important that we have reporting of all incidents involving over \$500 to the Provincial Comptroller by any department. Then, the Provincial Comptroller then reports to the Public Accounts Committee of which the member from Rosetown-Biggart is the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, we did exactly that. The only challenge that I'd point out in the reference to the case is that these things take time to investigate. We will take the time to investigate and make sure that we're not remiss in our responsibility to follow the rules. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, yes or no. To the minister: were two employees of this government fired over financial irregularities? And if so, when?

The Speaker: — The Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that any time that we have incidents of irregularities, it's important that we are very responsive. And every time we have a question or an allegation, we take those allegations and questions very seriously.

There are many good staff in this government, Mr. Speaker. In my particular department there are many really good staff that do a tremendous amount of good work. They are responding to thousands of people, Mr. Speaker.

We will continue following the rules set out by our Minister of Finance to make sure that there's good accountability measures within our government. It is a \$7 billion operation. And, Mr. Speaker, we take all those rules as seriously as we can. And we will follow the procedures set out by our Minister of Finance. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Well it would be nice if the minister was even in the same area code as the question, Mr. Speaker. But that's clearly not the case.

Here's what this Legislative Assembly, here's what members of this Assembly asked the Minister Responsible for Community Resources and Employment. Here's the quote: "Is management of the department aware of any allegations of fraud or other

illegal activity within the department from April 1, 2005 to the present . . . ?”

We also asked the question, quote: “Does management of the department have any knowledge of any actual or suspected fraud or other illegal activity from April 1, 2005 to the present . . . ?”

Information relating to these fraud cases was apparently then, Mr. Speaker, withheld from the official opposition, withheld from the people of the province of Saskatchewan.

To the minister or to the Premier: why are they now withholding information when only months ago they made a commitment to come clean, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, we have not withheld any information. That Leader of the Opposition knows very well that his seatmate right next to him, the member from Rosetown-Biggar, is the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee.

And, Mr. Speaker, we have gone to Public Accounts to account to the public exactly what happened in many of these instances. And we have the rules — as we’ve indicated — settled very clearly by the Minister of Finance, when and if we have irregularities that they’re investigated and any information attached to those investigations that first of all the comptroller knows it. Then the comptroller certainly reports to the Public Accounts Committee.

Mr. Speaker, it’s really, really important for folks to know out there that we take these issues seriously. The rules have been spelled out. And certainly the people that have not been acting in good faith on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan are being caught. Our system caught the problems and we took corrective steps and we advised people accordingly. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:15]

The Speaker: — Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I know that NDP government has been around for a very long time; the people of the province of Saskatchewan think way too long.

But here is a lesson for the minister. He — that minister — and that Premier are accountable to this Legislative Assembly, to the taxpayers of, the people of this province. That’s who he is accountable to.

Here is a quote that the government offered up when they introduced the changes not more than a few months ago, quote: “Transparency and financial accountability have been the hallmarks of the NDP government since the early 1990’s . . .” This might come as news to the minister responsible for SPUDCO [Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development

Company]. “This Government is committed to safeguarding the money belonging to the people of . . . [the province],” the quote goes on to say.

In this case, in this case employees have been fired, and there’s been no notification. Written questions were not answered, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: why has this government withheld information on these fraud cases?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, I reiterate, we have not withheld any information. And it’s kind of odd, Mr. Speaker, coming from that member that sought the nomination of one of the most corrupt governments in the history of Canada to get up and start talking about accountability. Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, furthermore, furthermore the continual attack on the civil servants is unwarranted. There are thousands of people that are working for this government. There are many thousands that will continue working for this government, and these many solid civil servants that are worked very hard and dedicated their entire lives to service of others, they have done a tremendous job.

There are a few bad apples, Mr. Speaker, and our system caught them. And we reacted and we responded.

Mr. Speaker, the important note is that this Minister of Finance set out rules. The rules are clear. We follow them and we will continue to follow them, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, to be sure the problem in government today in the province of Saskatchewan is not the civil servants, Mr. Speaker. It’s that incompetent NDP government, Mr. Speaker. That’s the problem.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — Here’s a question for the Premier, and I want the Premier to take to his feet, please, and be clear with this Assembly. Can he, can he assure, can he assure, Mr. Speaker, this Assembly and the people of the province today — can he provide unequivocal assurances on behalf of each of his ministers of each of the departments — that there are no other instances of fraud or criminal activity that they are aware of within their departments, Crown corporations, or agencies? Will he do that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what is important is to point out that our internal process caught these problems, Mr. Speaker, and that our system works. When the Minister of Finance set out the rules, he set out the very stringent rules. They are very public and, Mr. Speaker, these rules work. Our internal process caught this and, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that, as I pointed out, there are many thousands of people that work in my department and in this government. They do a tremendous, powerful job for the people of Saskatchewan and many of them are fantastic. They are honest, hard-working, and they do their jobs right.

And what is kind of worrisome to me, Mr. Speaker, is why all of a sudden on the credibility issue we have that member, who ran for the party that put this province 15-plus billion dollars in debt . . . And that's why that party will never have any credibility on this issue, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I suspect that just in a few moments this government will be able to explain to now retired civil servants just how they respect them and how they want to treat them with fairness and equality.

This question is for the Premier: will he not stand in the Assembly today and give the assurance to this Assembly and to the people of the province that this government is not withholding any information with respect to the allegations of or suspected fraud or criminal activity within his government departments? Will he do that?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Mr. Speaker, what is important to note is that as the leader of the so-called opposition tries to engage the folks that are in the gallery, I'll point out to the folks in the gallery that every group that comes into the gallery they try to be everything to everybody, Mr. Speaker. They do that every week and every day, Mr. Speaker. And that's why the people of Saskatchewan say you have no credibility because you play to the gallery.

And, Mr. Speaker, what's important and been pointed out, you're trying to be a mile wide but an inch deep and that's exactly why that party across doesn't have any credibility. That is why the people of Saskatchewan don't trust that party, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Retired Civil Servants' Pensions

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Joining us today in the legislature are over 200 retired civil servants from across Saskatchewan. They're looking for fairness, they're looking for equity, they're looking for parity. These men and

women worked for years assuring the people of Saskatchewan received the highest-quality services possible. Now these people are being denied the indexed pensions that many other public servants, retirees are now receiving.

Mr. Speaker, they don't think that's fair, and the official opposition doesn't think that's fair. Mr. Speaker, why is this NDP government not considering the request of these well-respected senior citizens?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — As the Minister of Community Resources has pointed out, the position of the Sask Party seems to depend on who's in the gallery on any given day. And as we know from the member for Thunder Creek, that that commitment lasts about as long as it takes for them to leave the gallery.

Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges of being in government is running the government, running the finances of the province in a way that is accountable and providing a fair and appropriate way to deal with things. There are two main issues that we need to deal with on this file. First of all is the means by which we provide increases to these retired civil servants. The second is the rate at which it's done.

There is no doubt that in the last 40 years that this plan has been providing ad hoc increases, that there is now concern about the continued ad hoc basis. And perhaps we should look at legislation. There is not however, there is not however a consistent approach in terms of what that rate should be.

I am prepared to look at legislation this fall to deal with the level of the increase, but we will need to have more discussion about what that rate is.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I'll remind that minister and that Premier . . .

The Speaker: — Order please. Order please. Order. Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind that minister and that Premier that these people in the gallery have been trying to get a meeting with them, and they have been refused. Their answer changes depending on who's in the gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, like many of their generation, these retirees are asking for nothing that they have not already paid for. During their years of working for this province, these workers contributed millions of dollars to the government's coffers. But that money went directly into the day-to-day operating budget of the government. Had the money been invested in a special fund as is now the case, Mr. Speaker, these men and women would have had more than enough money to deal with their

current needs.

Mr. Speaker, will this government do the right thing and right this obvious wrong and commit today to pension indexing for these people?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — It is interesting to hear the Saskatchewan Party again today call for more spending today. The impact of the decision that they are calling for would add \$347 million to the public debt — \$347 million. That's on top of the 160 million that they want in agriculture. That's on top of the \$100 million they want for a CAIS [Canadian agricultural income stabilization] payout. That's on top of what they want for highways. That's on top of yesterday what they were saying they wanted for Avastin, in terms of people that were in the galleries then.

The simple fact is that we need to find a balanced approach to deal with the request of these retired civil servants, and we need to be able to do so in a way that meets the needs also of the taxpayers who are called on to meet those demands. That, Mr. Speaker, is what we are working on. That, Mr. Speaker, is what we're committed to doing. And I would ask the support of the opposition in doing that.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Chris Pasloske is a retired public servant in Regina. In a recent letter, Mr. Pasloske said he and his fellow pensioners have been, and I quote, "totally frustrated and stonewalled" by a Premier who won't even meet with them to hear their case.

Tom Yeomans worked 38 years for SaskPower. In an interview last year, Mr. Yeomans said, and I quote: "Essentially, you get the feeling they're waiting us out. How much longer do they have to wait before we're gone?"

Mr. Speaker, is this indeed the NDP strategy — wait this out so it's no longer an issue?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I think that that member has now reached a new low. I cannot think of a more disgusting thing that he has said in this House, and I just think it is shameful and it demeans the debate that we're having in the Assembly today.

Let me say this, that I have said that we are prepared to take to this Assembly, this fall, legislation. What we do not have agreement on however is what the rate of increase is.

I would note that the ad hoc increase approach has been in effect for longer than I have been alive. This has been through five different administrations that has used this approach. We

have a fund today that is working on a 50 per cent actuarial basis in terms of 50 per cent of CPI [consumer price index]. If we increase that, there is an impact on the overall debt of the province.

What we need to do is balance out what those competing interests are — those of the retired civil servants that seek an increase and those of the taxpayers that will be called on to pay for it. That, Mr. Speaker, is really what the issue is, not the cheap politics from the Sask Party opposite.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the minister that I was quoting from many of these individuals that are in the gallery today.

Mr. Speaker, in NDP Saskatchewan this is the only province in Canada without a legislated cost of living increase for pensioners. Ad hoc, ad hoc, as the minister likes to talk about, ad hoc increases were granted in 14 of the last 21 years at the whim of the Finance minister of the day. Seven of those did not have an increase. Many were zeroes. But no one seems to turn the ad hoc into a permanent benefit, Mr. Speaker.

Sadly as this is often the case with this government, these pensioners have had no choice but to resort to the courts, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, with the ad hoc increases, this government has already conceded a point. Why does this matter have to continue before the courts, Mr. Speaker? Is the NDP government trying to wait this out until all those that are here aren't able to speak for themselves?

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier . . . Mr. Speaker, will the Premier and the Finance minister meet with these pensioners today and try to resolve this outstanding issue in an amicable manner and circumvent the courts?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The Finance critic for the Sask Party shows both his ignorance of understanding of what is in fact the case across the country in terms of law and his understanding of the lawsuit that is before the courts today.

Let me point out that there are provinces on either side of us that do not provide CPI increases to their retired civil service. No, the member opposite clearly does not understand this. Alberta provides a 60 per cent increase and Manitoba provides two-thirds of the CPI for the previous year. That is the simple fact. The member ought not to distort this.

The member also ought to understand that there are five significant issues before the courts of which four of which will need to specifically be dealt with by the court. What we need to be very careful of is to make sure that those substantive arguments are heard and not debated on the floor of this

Assembly. That needs to be dealt with there.

I am however prepared to look at legislation this fall in order to dealing with the issue of a base rate increase. But that's an issue that we need to deal with in this Assembly. The other issue needs to wait for the courts, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Cannington.

Federal Gun Registry

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, earlier today Auditor General Sheila Fraser released a scathing report detailing hundreds of millions of dollars of wasted and mismanaged money within the Liberal long gun registry. This is money that could have been used to improve law enforcement and fight crime. Instead it was squandered on an ill-conceived gun registry. It did nothing to reduce crime.

It penalized thousands of law-abiding gun owners across Canada and here in Saskatchewan. Immediately after question period we'll be introducing a motion urging the federal government and all federal parties to scrap the Liberal long gun registry and use that money that will be saved to improve law enforcement and protection services across Canada.

To the Premier: will his government support this motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The position of this government has been consistent throughout the existence of the long gun registry. The Government of Saskatchewan does not agree that the registration of long guns has been helpful in reducing crime, particularly in Western Canada, particularly in rural, northern Saskatchewan. It imposes hardships on people, which is not the intended consequence of the registry.

But certainly we have not been supportive of the registry. The funds that have been spent on the registry could well be better spent on more focused attempts to reduce crime through policing and other measures, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

[14:30]

The Speaker: — The member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In yesterday's paper there was a story suggesting that Canadians support gun registry, according to an Ottawa reporter. The story neglected to mention that, while most Canadians support some form of gun registry, a strong majority — including 71 per cent in Saskatchewan and Manitoba — oppose the current Liberal gun registry.

I understand that the federal government is announcing its

intention to end the long gun registry while keeping the handgun registration. The Saskatchewan Party strongly supports that move. However it is unclear whether the Conservative government can get this through the legislation in parliament because the Liberals and the NDP in Ottawa want to keep this boondoggle in place.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier tell his NDP cousins in Ottawa to stop supporting this wasteful and useless Liberal long gun registry? Or is he tied to Jack Layton's eastern coattails?

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I take it that the member opposite is conceding that he is associated with . . . his party across the way is associated with the Conservative Party of Ottawa. They are cheerleading again for the federal government.

On this issue there isn't a disagreement within this legislature. On both sides of the House there are deep concerns about the long gun registry. This government has never supported the long gun registry, Mr. Speaker. But it's interesting that this matter, which is not a matter of dispute within this legislature at all, Mr. Speaker, would come on the floor of this legislature today.

Here is a party desperately trolling, desperately trolling across the way for votes in Weyburn-Big Muddy, Mr. Speaker. And they want to campaign against a party and against politicians that aren't even sitting in this room, Mr. Speaker. It's just crass politics.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, I would ask leave at this time, before orders of the day, to make some introductions of our visitor services people that have just come onsite. I do that at this time because there simply wasn't room in the galleries for introductions. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, you may see some very smart-looking people seated in the front row of the Speaker's gallery. With them is Lorraine deMontigny, who is the director of visitor services. But these young people are, first of all, Mark Bryanton, Amy Dancsok, Rebecca Parry, Marita Wacker, and Adam Zelmer.

They've just completed two weeks of training and orientation yesterday, and they attended the parliamentary program for public services. And all of these guests are bilingual.

I would also like to point out at this time that our visitor services is beginning their summer hours on the May long weekend. Building tours are offered until 9 p.m. every night of the week.

Members, please help me in joining to welcome our newest Legislative Assembly Service employees.

Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Speaker: — The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Hagel: — Mr. Speaker, in order to accommodate the work of the Human Services Committee and the Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure Committee, I move that this House do now adjourn.

Some Hon. Members: — Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those who favour the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those who oppose the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I do believe the ayes have it. The House stands adjourned until tomorrow. Order.

The House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 14:35.]

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