

The Assembly met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise this morning to present a petition opposed to the private sales exemption of \$3,000 on the purchase of used vehicles. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

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

And this petition is signed by citizens in such diverse communities as Esterhazy, Melville, Yorkton, Moosomin, Kelvington, and Ebenezer.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present a petition that's opposed to the government's system of taxing private sales. And I read the petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

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

And this is signed by the good people from Yorkton, Churchbridge, Spy Hill, all around the province, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand today to present petitions on behalf of people who would like to see the exemption of the PST (provincial sales tax) on private sales under \$3,000 to be extended to all dealers throughout the province. 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 provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

And the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the city of Swift Current.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition regarding a fuel tax.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of

government.

The people that have signed this petition are from Naicam and Lintlaw.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the high price of fuel. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

Signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are mostly from the community of Melfort, but also from Brooksby and Kinistino.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well I rise to present a petition. This one deals with the tax on used vehicles. Reading the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present is signed by individuals from the communities of Rosthern and Warman and mostly from Saskatoon.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise also in regards to the taxation on used cars . . . vehicles, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

And this petition is signed by people from Regina.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Mr. Speaker, I stand again today to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the high cost of fuel, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

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

This is signed by the citizens of Estevan, Torquay, and Regina.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of people in Swift Current who are concerned about their hospital. And they've signed a petition whose prayer can be summarized as follows, that the provincial government should assist in the regeneration plan for the Swift Current Regional Hospital, providing approximately 7.54 million and 65 per cent of the funding, allowing the Swift Current District Health Board the opportunity to provide improved health care services in Swift Current.

And it's signed by residents of the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the PST on used cars:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

And it's signed by constituents of Humboldt, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

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

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

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

The communities involved, Mr. Speaker, are from Regina, White City, Sturgis, a number of communities in Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present today on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

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

These petitions, Mr. Speaker, come from the Debden and Canwood areas of the province.

I so present.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I rise too on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan concerned about the tax paid inventory on used cars. The petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on savings to their customers.

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

This petition is signed from residents from around the Regina area.

Mr. Weekes: — I would also like to rise to read a petition opposed to no exemption for tax paid inventory:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

Signed by the good people from Regina, Regina Beach, Punnichy. Thank you.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here from the citizens of Saskatchewan. A petition to reduce fuel tax:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the federal and provincial governments to immediately reduce fuel taxes by 10 cents a litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

People are from the town of Davidson.

I so present.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to read a petition about citizens concerned about the PST on sales of vehicles. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 tax exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they may choose to purchase a vehicle.

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

And the petitioners are from Fort Qu'Appelle, Regina, and

Hague, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition in regards to the tax paid inventory for used cars. The petition . . . prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good people of Regina.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise to present the petition on behalf of citizens concerned with the PST on used vehicles. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase the vehicle.

And this petition, Mr. Speaker, is signed by the good citizens of Yorkton, Preeceville, MacNutt, and a number of other communities in Saskatchewan.

I do so present.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today for to bring forth a petition regarding private sales exemption of \$3,000. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to provide a \$3,000 exemption for dealers in addition to private sales, therefore providing a fair tax break to the consumers of this province wherever they choose to purchase a vehicle.

And this petition is signed by the good people of Yorkton, Grayson, and Canora.

I so present.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition regarding forced municipal amalgamation. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to halt any plans it has to proceed with enforced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And this petition is signed by individuals from the community of Drinkwater.

I so present.

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition requesting exemption for tax paid inventory. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day, therefore providing these dealers the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The petition is signed by the good citizens of Wynyard and Mozart.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and pursuant to rule 12(7) they are hereby read and received.

They are the petitions of citizens of the province of Saskatchewan petitioning the Assembly:

To halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities;

To provide funding for Swift Current hospital;

To cause the federal and provincial governments to reduce fuel taxes.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Municipal Amalgamation

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of yesterday's ruling by the Speaker, I would like to read some excerpts from the statement the Premier issued last night. Following his meeting with SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities), the Premier said, and I quote:

My government's intentions in these negotiations is clear. I want to stick it to all the people who didn't vote for me in the last election. You took away my majority. I'm taking away your local governments. By the time I get done with you . . . You'll be able to hold your next convention in a phone booth. That'll learn ya.

Mr. Speaker, I can't believe the Premier would make a statement like that. It shows his true agenda in this municipal amalgamation debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Celebration of Passover

Ms. Lorje: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sunset tomorrow marks the beginning of the Jewish week-long celebration of Passover. This is the time during which Jewish people the world over observe and remember the preparation for and the flight from oppression in the land of Egypt as told in the Old Testament Book of Exodus.

As Jews prepare for this most solemn ritual, it is instructive I believe for all of us to remember with them both the historical and moral significance of this event. The migration, which began thousands of years ago, still influences our religious and civil institutions.

The escape from slavery by the children of Israel led to the creation of laws which are the basis for our legal codes today. The Ten Commandments delivered to Moses during the flight are, some say, all the law we need.

This migration, perhaps the most significant in the history of mankind, was the direct result of one group of people being oppressed by another. The event that led directly to the establishment of what we call Western Civilization and to the creation of two of the world's great religions was initiated by racial and economic exploitation.

Mr. Speaker, in essence, this is what Passover represents. The belief in tolerance, in freedom, in the collective struggle for the rights of people.

On this important occasion I say to everyone, shalom and be well. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Budget

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of yesterday's ruling, I'd like to quote from the 2000 budget address tabled on the 29th of March by the Minister of Finance. The Minister of Finance said and I quote:

This budget is meant to send a cold and clear message of revenge to the taxpayers of Saskatchewan. Many of you are still wasting money on luxury items like food and clothing. That money belongs to me. I didn't earn it, I've done nothing to deserve it, but I'll not rest until I've sucked every possible dollar out of Saskatchewan taxpayers.

Besides, Mr. Speaker, I've now won three consecutive elections. I've got a big fat pension coming and those aren't cheap, you know.

Mr. Speaker, I think this budget speech sends the wrong message to taxpayers and I'd urge the Minister of Finance to reconsider his remarks.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

On-line Events Guide

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, more good news and no fiction

unlike from the other side this morning. Many Saskatchewan families will be gathering together to celebrate this holiday weekend. According to Tourism Saskatchewan more people may be visiting our province than ever before. A new tool will help tourists research and plan a visit to our province.

People from around the world and across the province can make the most of Saskatchewan events and attractions by using a new on-line events guide. By combining the databases of Tourism Saskatchewan and the Anniversary Secretariat a comprehensive listing of more than 1,100 Saskatchewan events occurring during 2000 has been created.

The electronic events guide is now available on the web site of Tourism Saskatchewan, the Anniversary Secretariat, and Sask Culture Inc. at the following web addresses: www.sasktourism.com; celebratingSask.com; and SaskCulture.sk.pa. Sask Culture Inc. and Sask Sport Inc., both community-based organizations, will work with Tourism Saskatchewan and the Anniversary Secretariat in this joint venture, and will be encouraging their members to use the on-line events guide to promote their own activities.

Last year inquiries to Tourism Saskatchewan reached over 450,000, a 67 per cent increase over the previous year. This huge increase is being driven mainly by inquiry to Tourism Saskatchewan web site as more and more people are travelling for information.

The Speaker: — Order. Order. The member's time has expired.

Liberal Election Platform

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In light of yesterday's ruling, I'd like to read some excerpts from the so-called Liberal platform from the last election. The platform said, and I quote:

This platform is simply election rhetoric. Don't count on us to really believe this stuff. Truth be told, after the election we'll fold in with the NDP faster than a cheap tent because we really need the money. We'll even be so blatant as to sit on our tongues and allow real NDP members to answer questions for us. This campaign is all about using the next four years to pad our pensions and have staff carry our bags. It's all about getting patronage jobs for our Liberal buddies. If anyone tries to tell you anything different, don't believe a word about it. It's just rhetoric.

Mr. Speaker, with a platform like that, it's no wonder the Liberals did so poorly in the last election and it's obvious why they won't survive the next.

The Speaker: — Order, please. I just want to remind all hon. members to please . . . the Speaker ought not to be entered into the debate.

Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the year 2000 we are fortunate to have many life-saving procedures that were unheard of even 10 years ago. Thanks to organ and tissue

donations, many people are given a second chance at life. Sadly, many lives are still needlessly lost because of the shortage of donor organs and tissues.

Mr. Speaker, this week of April 16 is — through the 22 — is Organ and Tissue Donor Awareness Week. This past Monday morning the Minister of Health along with a coalition for organ donor awareness officially kicked off Donor Awareness Week. This year the local theme is Thank You, Donor Families. It is a fitting time, for without the donor families' generosity these medical miracles could not take place. The decision to donate a loved one's tissues and organs takes courage. Often donations do not take place because of lack of communication between the donor and his or her family. We must continue to raise awareness to address this problem.

Our appreciation is extended to the Saskatchewan Coalition for Organ Donor Awareness and their associates for the important work that they do. It is fitting that Donor Awareness Week take place so near to Easter — Easter celebrates renewal and new life. This is exactly what organ and tissue donation can do — it can give the gift of new life.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Use of Quotations in the House

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure everyone is aware, all the quotes in the previous three Saskatchewan Party member statements were fabricated to conform to and in accordance with yesterday's ruling.

Mr. Speaker, members are under no obligation to tell the truth, even when they're quoting from documents. This morning's member statements were meant to illustrate how dangerous this could potentially be.

Mr. Speaker, while we continue to adhere to the Assembly rules, we still believe the Premier should know better. He should stand in his place and apologize for misrepresenting and misquoting a public document.

Mr. Speaker, today I give you the assurance that this is the one and only time you will hear Saskatchewan Party members deliberately misquoting a public document.

The Premier often talks about maintaining traditions and decorum of this House. In fact, just the other day he was talking about members setting an example for the children in the gallery. Apparently, this applies to everyone but him. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier is sincere he will rise in his place, withdraw his earlier remarks, and make a similar commitment that his members will be accurate and honest when quoting public documents.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Diabetes

Ms. Higgins: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Diabetes is a growing public health concern in Saskatchewan with more than 40,000 of our residents having this disease and more than 3,000 new cases reported every year.

To combat the growing number of diabetes cases, I'm pleased to say that the government has targeted a quarter of a million dollars towards new initiatives for diabetes in recommendation of the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Diabetes. This new money will go towards planning a province-wide approach on diabetes education, prevention, and treatment, as well as the creation of a diabetes advisory body.

Mr. Speaker, health care and community leaders are already favourably commenting on this new plan. Christine Smillie of the Canadian Diabetes Association said:

The creation of the provincial advisory body is pivotal to the implementation of other advisory committee recommendations that will lead to better care and treatment for people with diabetes.

And Linda Cyr of FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) calls it a positive step to ensure culturally appropriate care and treatment is available.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the government and the Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Diabetes for their commitment to addressing this growing problem. This new provincial-wide approach will go a very long way into educating the public and preventing and treating this disease.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

Crown Corporation Earnings

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the minister of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan). Well, Mr. Minister, your gouging continues — another \$216 million in profits for the Crowns. Profits may be down this year, but that's not because of lower revenue. Crown revenues are actually up. You're actually gouging Saskatchewan taxpayers more than ever. You're just spending more of it. And now you've raised SaskTel and SaskEnergy rates by another \$40 million.

Mr. Minister, how can you justify hammering taxpayers with more rate hikes when you're actually making huge profits?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think all Saskatchewan people should be proud of these corporations and how well they're doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We need to thank all of the people who work in these corporations and provide us with some of the lowest rates for our utilities in the whole country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We need to thank them for the service that they provide. We need to continue to work to make sure that all of our Crowns remain commercially viable, because that's how

we will keep them as important parts of our economy.

We brought forward a very good budget a few weeks ago by having also a very strong Crown sector. We are building for the future of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well we just had a little list of . . . a short little list that he said ought to be thanked for what's going on. You missed the key group of people, Mr. Minister. That's the people of Saskatchewan that you raised the rates on, the people who are paying more — those taxpayers. You forgot to thank them.

The NDP (New Democratic Party) family of Crown corporations gets richer. You pay dividends; you make profits. The Saskatchewan families get poorer. I guess the Finance minister didn't raise enough taxes. The CIC minister has to make sure he's grabbed every last dime out of the taxpayers' pockets.

Mr. Minister, instead of raising rates all the time, why don't you look at cutting costs? There are more people working in the Crowns than ever before. They are spending more than ever before. Instead of reaching into the taxpayers' pockets again and again, why don't you look at tightening your own belt first?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to say that our Crowns are operating very well. They continue to look at their sources of revenue, their costs, and also the services that they provide, and they do that in a balanced way so that we can have the best services and the lowest rates in the country.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on average we have the lowest rates right across the board. I would like to remind the members opposite — members of this Alberta-envy party — that since 1994 the increase in the average utility rates in Alberta has been \$811; in Saskatchewan it's been half that, \$409.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister just had a quote over there and we know how trustworthy those are from that side of the House, so we'll leave it at that.

He again talked about what they pay attention to. And you'll want to note, Mr. Speaker, the very first thing he says that Crowns pay attention to are sources of revenue. In other words, you pay attention to where you get the money — that's the taxpayers.

The Saskatchewan Party caucus, Mr. Speaker, will be moving a series of private members' Bills to improve the accountability and management practice of your Crowns. This includes a new Crown corporation rate review Act.

Mr. Minister, it is now clear that your system doesn't work very

well. The interim panel, the interim panel really said they didn't even consider the rate of hikes on the consumer — didn't even consider that. Nor do they look at whether the Crown could do a better job of controlling their own expenses. We do need to broaden . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I would ask the hon. member to please go directly to his question.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, will you support the Saskatchewan Party proposal for a permanent rate review panel with a broader, more meaningful mandate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, we're working on the rate review panel matter, and that will continue.

But what I would like to say to the member opposite, the Conference Board of Canada has come out with a report that says our Crown corporations and their governance models, their accountability models, are in the top quartile — the top 25 per cent in the country — comparing both Crown and private companies.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — We have a system of corporations of which we can be proud. And they provide us good service at a reasonable cost and they also provide us with dividends on the investment that we as taxpayers have in them.

So what we're going to do is continue to operate these companies in a way that will make sure that they're never in danger like the members opposite put them in danger in the '80s. And we'll never let that happen again.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order.

Potato Industry

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well not every Crown corporation made a profit. The Minister for Sask Water managed to blow \$10 million on his hare-brained potato scheme. That's because even the NDP hasn't figured out a way to jack up the price of potatoes. In fact the government's little venture into the potato industry destroyed the price of potatoes and destroyed the provincial potato industry.

It cost taxpayers \$10 million and left hundreds of creditors out in the cold. And what does the minister say? What does the minister say? It's not his fault, it's the potato market's fault. Mr. Minister, you just don't get it. You destroyed the potato market; you lost millions of dollars; when are you going to take responsibility?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I find first of all this to be an incredible irony. We listened to the first member questioning and he's talking about the profits and complaining about the profits. And now the next member complains about the losses; so it's got to be one or the other.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I want to report that we have a very strong industry in the potato sector in Saskatchewan. As recently as yesterday . . . actually I pulled off the Canadian Press wire this morning, Mr. Vanclief our federal Agriculture . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order, order please. I'm siting fairly close to the minister and I can't hear his response, please.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the wire this morning I pulled off this bit of information, the federal Agriculture minister yesterday signed an agreement with China. And Canada is now the only country in the world — in the world — Mr. Speaker, to be able to export seed potatoes. And in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, we have a very good market and a very good environment for growing seed potatoes.

Dianne Moebis of the Saskatchewan Seed Potato Growers says that growth in the seed potato industry in Saskatchewan looks positive this year with up to 1,500 additional acres grown in the coming year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know it's interesting, a year ago the member for North Battleford was calling for a full investigation into the demise of the Lake Diefenbaker Potato Corporation.

But now that he's a member of the NDP, you don't hear a word from him. In fact when you pick up a copy of the Sask Water annual report, the first thing you see is the minister sitting there smiling with his new friends who just blew \$10 million on potatoes.

I'd like to ask the member for North Battleford, the new Vice-Chair of Sask Water — why have you changed your tune? Will you support the Saskatchewan Party's call for a full public inquiry into SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Company)?

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, first of all I just want to remind the member — I referred to it in my last answer — that Saskatchewan really has a very strong developing seed potato market. And by the way, Mr. Speaker, we are exporting those . . . many of those potatoes to Conservative Prince Edward Island, so I thought they might be interested in knowing that.

Mr. Speaker, as well the member refers to the fact that there were losses within the potato corporation's . . . within the division of Sask Water SPUDCO. And in fact that's true. Over the last three years there were accumulated losses but I remind the member, it was over three years.

If I look at the record of what that party did over 10 years of accumulated losses, if we had \$10 million, they had \$10 billion, Mr. Speaker — 10 billion losses over their term in government, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I would say to the minister, I would say . . .

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would say to the minister responsible for Sask Water, will he listen to his colleague and bring about a public inquiry because taxpayers deserve answers?

Mr. Minister, you blew millions of dollars on SPUDCO, creditors are out millions more, you almost single-handedly destroyed the potato industry. And now instead of taking responsibility, you're transferring what's left of the assets over to CIC, so you can bury your mismanagement even deeper.

Mr. Minister, taxpayers deserve answers. The people in the Lucky Lake area who lost thousands of dollars deserve answers. The last thing we need is another NDP cover-up, Mr. Minister, with your Liberal Vice-Chair supplying the whiteout.

You've lost \$10 million. Will you now hold that independent, public inquiry that your colleague is asking for into your mismanagement of SPUDCO?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a hard group of individuals to please. Again I remind them the first speaker, the first member was critical of the profits and now this one is critical of the losses. It's very . . . indeed, very hard to please.

Mr. Speaker, I remind the member that as of yesterday, with the tabling of the annual reports, that is now the third, clean, annual audited report that's been tabled by our Provincial Auditor. And additionally, Mr. Speaker, additionally, the Provincial Auditor is engaged in a special audit of Sask Water which specifically is focusing on SPUDCO and that, I am to understand, will be tabled in this legislature close to the end of May, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Minister, it's my understanding that your officials have been out in the Lucky Lake area signing contracts, enticing farmers to grow potatoes. In fact, you've given them marching orders to fill those empty storage bins no matter what. No matter how much it costs taxpayers. No matter what it does to the market.

Mr. Minister, is that true? And if it is, haven't you learned anything from your first potato fiasco?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, I'm even more confused now than at the very beginning. And I'll freely admit that based on that question.

Mr. Speaker, is he saying that it's better to have the potato storage facilities empty? I don't understand. He's absolutely correct. We are trying to fill those storage facilities so that there is revenues raised through leases for the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, again I remind the member, as well, that with the release of this information yesterday from the federal Agriculture minister, Canada is now the only country in the world permitted to export seed potatoes to China. And Saskatchewan has a very strong industry in seed potatoes.

We're very proud of that. And, of course, Mr. Speaker, we will try to sign up as many agreements as we can. We don't deny that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Funding for Education

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite just made light of losing \$10 million — \$10 million that education could have used desperately.

My question is for the Minister of Education. Mr. Minister, we posed questions to you on Tuesday regarding the education budget and how many school districts will be forced to cut services. And as usual from this government, we received no answers.

CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) radio reported the very same day that 11 school districts would be suffering budget cuts and would be forced to close schools. We questioned what the source of that story was and you know what the answer was? Your department.

Mr. Minister, your own department is confirming to the media that 11 school districts have had their budgets cut by at least \$100,000. Mr. Minister, will you table a list of those districts in the House today?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly as I've told the members opposite on numerous occasions in the past week, the increase to the budget for K to 12 education was substantial this year. With regard to the increase we're looking at an additional \$18.5 million on the foundation operating grant.

But I must remind the members opposite that there are two parties here who made education a priority in the last election.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — The member's opposite party did not make education a priority. And the fact is that these parties respect the autonomy of school divisions to make decisions within their jurisdiction. We will not change that. And I ask the members opposite, do you intend to tell school divisions what to do? We don't believe in that. We believe school divisions make decisions and they make decisions based on their enrolment, based on their assessment, and the services that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously the minister just broke another promise. If you had promised it was a priority and you have to increase mill rate, it's not a priority.

Mr. Speaker, at least 11 school districts are facing extremely difficult decisions right now. This NDP budget is having a devastating effect on schools, on school districts, on staff and families, and children in this province. The boards will had to consider mill rate increases at a time when tax revolts are on the mind of most people.

School boards are considering cutting staff, they are considering cutting back on building maintenance, school supplies, and programming. And when faced with no other way to turn, they are even considering closing schools, Mr. Minister. You are the reason they are closing schools in this province.

Mr. Minister, will you table the school districts facing massive budget cuts and will you table your hit list of schools for closure this year?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as we said in the past, we respect the autonomy of school divisions to make decisions. And we provide through the foundation operating grant an increase this year of \$18.5 million dollars calendar over calendar.

But I must remind the members opposite that the zero that they would have provided would have provided nothing for school boards this year. And then when they talk about lists, what would those lists say? And are you telling me that school divisions cannot have the autonomy to make decisions? Do you want to take over school divisions like they have in Alberta? Answer that question. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, it's hard to decide if the minister wants to hide behind or blame school divisions right now. The NDP Minister of Education supports the provincial budget that continues to download costs to local school boards.

We're hearing from people all around this province who are unhappy with the tax increases in the budget, and now they're even more unhappy because they have to have an increase in education mill rates. But they know what the problem is — it's this NDP's and minister's passion for taxes.

Mr. Speaker, the SSTA (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association) warned everyone in a press release yesterday that if downloading continues, we'll be facing a crisis in education very soon. In fact, Mr. Speaker, last year there was three school districts in this province who received less than a hundred thousand dollars.

Mr. Minister, in light of this provincial budget and the cuts the school districts are receiving, how many school districts this year will receive a pittance of funding from this government?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melenchuk: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite are having some difficulty in understanding the foundation operating grant.

The foundation operating grant is an equalization formula, and every year the provincial government provides a sum of money. And every year that sum of money is distributed based on equity, transparency, and unconditionality. And this has been agreed to by all the stakeholders, including the trustees association, representing all school divisions.

And when you talk about some school divisions who've had declines in foundation operating grant this year, they've also had declines in enrolment.

But just to point out to the school divisions that have had significant increases: Kamsack got 7.7 per cent; Indian Head, up 6.2 per cent; Saskatoon East, up 6.5 per cent; Outlook, up 7.5 cent; Nipawin, up 6.4 per cent; and . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister himself doesn't understand the equalization factor. When you increase it from 15 to 16, that means local people have to pick up more money before you even start talking to them.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP knows that education is living in a bubble . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, please. Hon. members, kindly allow the questions to be asked. And please respect the opportunity for members on their feet to be heard on both sides, for the question and the answer. I ask you to please respect your rules, the rules of the House.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP Minister of Education is living in a bubble if he thinks the problems school boards are facing right now aren't serious. But the problem is, Mr. Speaker, that bubble is going to burst.

Because the legacy he's leaving our education system will be one of staffing cutbacks, crumbling buildings, and school closures. That's your legacy for schools for this province. Because the school districts face the decisions forced on them by this budget and they look ahead to next year, they're even more discouraged.

Mr. Minister, you campaigned on a promise to cut education taxes. But what have you done as Minister of Education? You have a massive tax increase to everyone. All boards can try to do is maintain the status quo. They can't even try to improve the situation.

Mr. Minister, if it was such a great budget for education, why are people from Saskatchewan now having to face another mill rate increase?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Melnychuk: — Mr. Speaker, again they're having trouble understanding the foundation operating grant formula.

You know, when you talk about the increases in this budget — \$28.5 million budget over budget; \$18.5 million on the

foundation operating grant; \$14 million increase for special education; an additional \$2 million for learning technology; an individual grant per student increase of \$263; an increase in special education in disabilities two category of \$3,000 — and when you add in the property tax rebates of 25 million, we're looking at this provincial treasury providing over \$50 million to the K to 12 system this year.

And the fact of the matter is that some school divisions that have high assessment . . . And I'll give an example. Weyburn Central has an assessment of \$720,000 per student. They will get little or no grant this year. Ile-a-la-Crosse has an assessment of only 18,000 . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hospital Waiting Lists in Saskatoon Health District

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health.

Madam Minister, yesterday it was released that despite an extra \$5.5 million injection into the Saskatoon Health District to reduce waiting lists, waiting times indeed have grown. This cash injection was supposed to help with the reduction of waiting lists, but instead it obviously isn't working.

Madam Minister, when will you come to realize that just throwing money at a problem is not the answer? When will you support a value for money audit, Madam Minister, to see that the money is being spent efficiently and effectively?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, for the information of all assembled, Saskatoon was able to provide an additional 1,000 surgeries to the citizens of this province.

I just want to remind the member, and I quote from a *Leader-Post* article, Monday November 17th, 1997, which includes the policies adopted by the members opposite, the Sask Party, who want to go the Alberta route. They want to allow private surgical clinics to open in this province.

Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order. The noise level is just beyond acceptance. Please, hon. members. I would ask the minister to complete her response. Kindly allow her to be heard.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — They want to allow private surgical clinics in this province and I can say to the people of this province that we will never allow the Saskatchewan Party to privatize publicly funded, publicly administered health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Order, order.

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

The Speaker: — Order.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, it hasn't taken long, one day after your ruling, already the minister's fabricating quotes out of the paper and attributing them. This is not appropriate . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Hon. members please. That is a direct allegation, accusation. I would ask hon. members to please respect one another.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it seems already clear that the minister does not realize that what she is currently doing is simply not working. Madam Minister, you've been wandering around aimlessly for some time now. When are you going to get a handle on what's going on in the health care system in Saskatchewan?

Health care workers are under increasing stress. People are leaving the system. They're finding themselves increasingly at odds with your policies, Madam Minister. And now as part of the agreement you have stated yourself that it's possible that you may claw back some of this money from the Saskatoon Health District.

Madam Minister, will you assure the Saskatoon Health District that you will not claw back the money that you have given them in an attempt to reduce your ridiculous waiting time?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, every day in this legislature we listen to the members talking about Alberta as though somehow Alberta is the envy of the country and this province.

Every day they stand in this Assembly and talk about young people leaving this province to go to Alberta when we have evidence in terms of a labour market study that more young people are coming here with outside credentials than people that are leaving. Every day they stand up here and they hammer the people of this province because of what the people of this province have built.

Well, I want to assure the members, and I quote from *The Leader-Post* which outlines the policies of the members opposite on the founding of their party, November 17, 1997, and they say they want to "allow private surgical clinics in (this) province."

Well, the people of Alberta are marching by the thousands against Ralph . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 205 — The Accountability of Subsidiaries of Subsidiary Crown Corporations Act

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I would give notice to move

first reading of Bill No. 205, The Accountability of Subsidiaries of Subsidiary Crown Corporations Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 212 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Appointment of Directors)

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 212, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Appointment of Directors) be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 222 — The Crown Corporation Managers' and Permanent Heads' Salaries Act

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I move the first reading of Bill No. 222, The Crown Corporation Managers' and Permanent Heads' Salaries Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 225 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Foreign Investments)

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure I move first reading of Bill No. 225, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Foreign Investments).

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 226 — The Crown Corporations Rate Review Act

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, I wish to move first reading of Bill No. 225 — 226, sorry Mr. Speaker, The Crown Corporations Rate Review Act, 2000.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 228 — The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to move first reading of Bill No. 228, The Crown Corporations Disclosure Act.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

Bill No. 230 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Referendums)

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move first reading of Bill No. 230, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2000 (Referendums) be now introduced and read a first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

**Bill No. 29 — The Residential Tenancies
Amendment Act, 2000**

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 29, The Residential Tenancies Amendment Act, 2000 be now introduced and read the first time.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a first time and ordered to be read a second time at the next sitting.

STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

Decorum in the Assembly

The Speaker: — Hon. members, before orders of the day, I just have a brief comment to make. Members know that the essence of my ruling yesterday was to remind members that they are responsible for accuracy and truthfulness of their remarks in this Assembly. I ask members to remember that they are responsible for maintaining the public trust.

The type of behaviour we have witnessed during members' statements only adds to the cynicism, the public cynicism. Order. Order, please.

Members are also aware that they must not comment on or debate a ruling of the Chair. And I ask . . . The behaviour of certain members during members' statements today shows the reason for this rule. And I ask members to respect the Assembly and its traditions in this regard, and one another.

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Based on earlier consultation with the opposition, I would request leave of the Assembly to make a statement of interest to members.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Best Wishes to Donna Bryce

Mr. Kowalsky: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My purpose today is to stand up and say thank you and to say happy trails to a visiting officer of this legislature. One of the good things that Ontario has done for us lately, Mr. Speaker, is that they've authorized Donna Bryce to be made an attachment to the Clerk's office here in our legislature. And she actually became a very integral part of our legislature over the last two months.

Donna comes to us from Queen's Park, where she sits as a committee Clerk. While here, Donna worked with us in the House, and even more importantly, she worked with the Tobacco Control Committee, of which I was Chair. She was in charge of the itinerary. The only person out of Saskatchewan on the itinerary and we put her in charge of getting us around here. She said it was easy because it was flat and was all nicely squared off.

But in the short time that Donna was here she saw much of Saskatchewan. We took her to the four corners of

Saskatchewan, from Maple Creek to Estevan, all the way up to Nipawin and all the way to Beauval, several places in between, and ended up in the good city of Prince Albert.

I have to say that Ms. Bryce took excellent charge of logistics. She was in charge of seven MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly), two sound crew, two *Hansard* people, one researcher, Tanya Hill. No equipment was lost and no members were lost. Perhaps even more significantly, Mr. Speaker, during the meetings she competently and professionally kept the Chair in line.

Donna will be leaving us, going back to her home in Toronto. She'll be home for Easter, home with her family. We want to thank you, Donna, and we want to wish you much success in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Bjornerud: — With leave, to respond, Mr. Speaker.

Leave granted.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Government Whip to wish Donna well on behalf of the member for Estevan and Weyburn-Big Muddy and myself, who travelled many miles with Donna and members from the other side to many communities, some I'd never even been to before, Mr. Speaker, and had the pleasure of visiting. I'm sure many that Donna had never even heard of before. And she was the one, as the member opposite said, planning how we got there. And even had the occasion to freeze in a number of planes, sitting with Donna. An experience I'm sure that she'll never forget.

So, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Saskatchewan Party we want to wish Donna and her family a Happy Easter. We want to wish her a safe trip home. And we want to wish her the very best in the future.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. members, by your leave, I also would like to express my appreciation and take the opportunity to say thank you and farewell to Ms. Donna Bryce. Donna's been here on loan, as has been mentioned, from the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

She agreed to leave her husband, home, and career when she was given the opportunity to come to Saskatchewan and spend three months as a Committee Clerk for the Tobacco Control Committee and as a Table officer as our House sits. Despite the disruption to her personal life, she was enthusiastic about the opportunity to expand her knowledge about parliamentary practice in our country.

Donna's decision exemplifies the professionalism and dedication of those individuals whose careers are dedicated to the service of our parliamentary process. We are truly fortunate in Canada that in every province, including Saskatchewan, we are able to rely on Table officers and legislative staff to provide

first-rate service above and beyond the call of duty.

We truly appreciate the assistance you provided Donna. And I hope we were able to provide a number of learning opportunities for you to observe our parliamentary traditions. I know your work with the committee provided an opportunity to travel throughout our great province and see a bit of Saskatchewan's traditions and cultures outside the political arena. And I hope that you have some good memories and stories to take back to your colleagues in Ontario.

I know the Ontario legislature and your family are eager for you to come home. We will miss you, Donna. Thank you for agreeing to come here and for all the assistance you have provided for these past three months. On behalf of the Legislative Assembly, I wish you all the best in your work at Queen's Park.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Also before orders of the day, hon. members, I would like to table the report of the Provincial Auditor to the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan on the 1999 financial statements of CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) Subsidiary Crown Corporations. I so table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 28 — The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendment Act, 2000

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move second reading of The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendment Act.

It's an honour to rise in the House, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the important contribution that the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate make to our province. These officers of the Legislative Assembly provide a valuable service to the people of Saskatchewan. And I'm pleased to move second reading of an Act that will clarify their important role.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will ensure that provisions respecting the Ombudsman and the Child's Advocate are consistent with those governing other officers of the Legislative Assembly. The amendments will clarify that the Children's Advocate acts independently from the Ombudsman, and update provisions respecting these officers of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments provide that the salaries of the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate will be determined by the Board of Internal Economy, and that they will receive allowances for travelling and other expenses incurred in the performance of their duties at rates approved by the Board of Internal Economy. Similar provisions, Mr. Speaker, as you know govern the Conflict of Interest Commissioner and the Chief Electoral Officer.

Amendments will also provide that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may suspend the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate while the legislature is not in session on grounds of incapacity to act, neglect of duty, Mr. Speaker, or misconduct. These provisions are in line with those governing other officers of the Assembly such as the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Conflict of Interest Commissioner.

These amendments will also provide that the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate file their annual reports in accordance with The Tabling of Documents Act, 1991. And this represents the standard for government accountability, and similar provisions govern other officers of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate operates independently from the Ombudsman. Therefore the amendments will repeal a provision that states that the Ombudsman in consultation with the Children's Advocate is responsible for the administration of the office of the Children's Advocate. The present provision does not reflect the current practice, as the offices are separately administered.

The amendments will also provide that the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate file separate annual reports to further emphasize the distinctiveness of these two officers. Separate annual reports reflect the different emphasis and audiences for these reports. Mr. Speaker, the Children's Advocate is responsible to the Legislative Assembly rather than to the executive branch of government.

The amendments will remove a provision that allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to assign duties or functions to the Children's Advocate. The Act already appropriately provides that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may refer matters to the Children's Advocate, and that the Children's Advocate shall report on those matters.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments will also clarify a number of other points. For instance there's a provision that ensures that the Children's Advocate has jurisdiction to conduct investigations respecting wards of the Minister of Social Services, aged 18 to 21, who continue to receive services under The Child and Family Services Act. This amendment will ensure that all wards of the Social Services minister have access to the assistance of the Children's Advocate.

Another amendment will clarify that the Ombudsman's right of access to documents relevant to his or her investigation includes the right to copy such documents.

Another amendment, Mr. Speaker, will allow the Ombudsman, in appropriate circumstances, to waive the requirement that complaints to the Ombudsman be in writing. This amendment will ensure that the Ombudsman's office is fully accessible to the public.

Another will clarify that after the Ombudsman reports possible misconduct discovered during an investigation, the investigation may continue.

Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that these amendments will ensure consistency respecting provisions governing officers of the Legislative Assembly, will also clarify that the Children's

Advocate acts independently from the Ombudsman, and also update and clarify other provisions respecting these officers of the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, in closing let me thank, on behalf of everyone, the Ombudsman and the Children's Advocate for the work they do. I'm pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today on this Bill to debate and provide some comment on the changes to the Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act.

It's very interesting that this piece of legislation is coming forward just after the Child Advocate has presented a report dealing with the many inadequacies in the Social Services department; in fact is a scathing report, as reported by the media, of Social Services.

So it's interesting that the government at this time would be bringing in amendments to that Act which allows the government to set salaries by order in council. At the present time that is not the case. The salary is set independently of this Assembly. It's set in accordance with the salaries outlined for Provincial Court judges. Now that is to be changed under this particular Act, this particular amendment, so that the salary is set by the Board of Internal Economy on which sits four government members and two members of the opposition.

You have to wonder why that was necessary to take place at this particular point in time, and why if that was the proper manner in which the salaries were to be set, that wasn't done in the initial legislation. I guess it's really important to question the minister as to why the initial legislation set out the salary levels to be tied to the Provincial Court judges, which is independent of this Assembly. And why then is there a need to have that changed today?

So it really makes a person wonder why these changes are necessary? Is there some other things that are happening that need to be debated in this House dealing with this particular officer of this legislature, that the government is for some reason bringing this piece of legislation forward?

I find it very interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the government — when the Child Advocate was being reappointed — didn't want to follow the process that was set out in The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Act and now they're bringing in legislation to change that Act. When we wished to have the process followed, they voted against doing so, Mr. Speaker.

Now they're also changing the Act to allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council — which is the Premier and the cabinet — to be able to remove the Child Advocate for various reasons. They can suspend her or remove her from office for matters of incompetence. Who judges whether the Ombudsman or the Child Advocate, in this particular case, is incompetent? Is it the Assembly? Is it Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Premier and cabinet? Who makes that determination?

When a report comes down that is scathing of the government, does that mean the officer of this Assembly is carrying out her

duties, his duties in the proper manner with the proper competence, or does the Premier and cabinet judge it to be otherwise? I think we are walking on very dangerous ground here, Mr. Speaker, with these particular amendments, especially when this piece of legislation would also allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council, the Premier and cabinet, to direct the Ombudsman and Child Advocate as to what areas they are to prepare reports on.

I think those offices need to be independent, and be able to make investigations and report on whatever issues they feel are important and need to be investigated. There should be no limits on it.

(1115)

And I'm hoping that when the minister has the chance to stand up and explain this Bill in a proper manner, rather than just a few seconds, that in Committee of the Whole, he will be able to explain exactly what their intentions are. Will they be presenting references to the Child Advocate and the Ombudsman such that they overload the minister's office so that they can't perform other duties that the Child Advocate may be interested in investigating.

I think these are all very, very serious matters, Mr. Speaker, that need to be seriously considered before this particular piece of legislation moves forward.

There are a number of third parties that are interested in this particular piece of legislation and how it's going to affect the workings of those offices and how it's going to affect in particular the children of this province.

We have seen that the government is failing drastically in protecting the children of this province. Three thousand children, Mr. Speaker, are in the foster care program and we are having as much as a 70 per cent failure to comply with the rules that the Social Services department has in place themselves.

So clearly there is a problem within the government, and we need to be assured, Mr. Speaker, that this piece of legislation is simply not an attempt to sweep all of that under the rug. Therefore, I move adjournment of debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 15

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 15 — The Department of Justice Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's come to my attention that this Bill by the . . . from the . . . through the Department of Justice that has been brought to us by the minister

is apparently mostly of a housekeeping nature. But as I went through the amendments, Mr. Speaker, I have some concerns about their ability to do housekeeping, and what it is they're actually trying to sweep under the table.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things we like to do in government is being able to protect those people who work on our behalf. And certainly the courtworkers of this province, who provide a valued service to us, have the opportunity to feel as though that we trust them, that they have the ability to work on our behalf in a positive manner, so that they feel as though that whatever they do will not be taken and held against them at any given time in the future.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the courtworkers in question in this case certainly have a great deal to do with the Aboriginal community. And one of the things that is always of great concern to us is that those members of the Aboriginal community who have come up against the law in some cases have the opportunity — those members of the Aboriginal community — to be able to access quality and safe processes so that they understand the English common law system.

And certainly, Mr. Speaker, it's very confusing at times, and it is particularly of great concern to us that those members of our society have the opportunity to be able to sit down with a great deal of sense of confidence and surety, so that when they receive advice on what's going . . . what's happening here in the legal system, what does it mean to them, that the person that they are talking to has the confidence of the government and has the confidence of the legal system and certainly the confidence of the justice of the . . . the Department of Justice.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that concerns me about this Bill is less of what it does for the people that are being held up with court action, as those people that are providing the legal advice.

Now it is certainly true that we need to trust those people who are employed by the government and provide them with a degree of surety that what they are doing is providing the service that is required and necessary. But, Mr. Speaker, what this Bill also talks about is some exemptions. And I have a great deal of concern with employees of the state being exempted from incompetence.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that's not to say that these people who rise every day and do their utmost to provide quality advice to those people who are up against our justice system and who need that quality of advice to ensure that their needs are being looked after in the courts, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's also important to understand that when it comes to degrees of incompetence in our system, Mr. Speaker, that there are no exemptions.

Mr. Speaker, in many cases in our society, whether it's in education or health, when mistakes are made due to incompetence, that those people that those mistakes are enacted against have a degree of assurance, Mr. Speaker, that they are able to protect themselves from the system.

And, Mr. Speaker, do we see that in this Bill? Well we're a little bit unsure about that. Because what it appears to be in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, is that there's an exemption here for those courtworkers who may have been able to pass on advice

through improper channels or improper methods, and certainly advice that has very little relevance to the cases that may be heard before the court, Mr. Speaker.

So it was with some reluctance that I can look at a Bill like this, Mr. Speaker, that talks about exempting courtworkers from the ability of those people that they represent in all good faith and in due course from offering extremely poor advice in many cases or advice that is simply not relevant to the case.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think this is something we're going to have to look at a little further in this Bill before we can move on with it to ensure that those people that are being looked after by the courtworkers in this province feel fully confident that their representatives are being held to the highest standard.

But, Mr. Speaker, also too, I have some concerns with the degree of confidentiality between the courtworkers and their client. Now, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have to understand that in the legal system there has to be a large degree of confidentiality between, between the workers, whether it's the lawyers themselves or the courtworkers and their clients. That goes without saying. But, Mr. Speaker, I have some concern in this Bill whether that addresses that issue or whether there is again an exemption in many cases here.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is always possible for someone inside the system — inside the legal system or inside the justice system — to access information that has not been provided to them on a confidential basis by their clients. Then . . . (inaudible) . . . Mr. Speaker, that the courtworkers or . . . are exempted then from legal proceedings that would put them in opposition to the justice system and their ability to try to proceed with court action against an individual who has been alleged to have broken the laws of our country. So I have a great degree of difficulty with that, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that in the next several weeks we have the opportunity to be able to debate this issue and certainly receive some clear understanding from the Minister of Justice regarding this.

Mr. Speaker, there is a bit of an anomaly that we're finding in this Bill that we're simply not getting a good enough clarification of and, Mr. Speaker, that has to do with age limits here. Now it seems as though that in this Bill we're going to provide the services of courtworkers for those people who have been charged under . . . in adult court for those who have been charged, Mr. Speaker.

Now we are wondering why those people in the Aboriginal community who are adults have to wait to be charged before they are provided with legal services, and whereas if they are a youth under the young offenders' Act being investigated, Mr. Speaker . . . and I use the word investigated because what this Act does, it clearly illustrates that if you are a young offender all you really have to do is be alleged to be a participator in a crime and you're provided with a courtworker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal of trouble on this side of the House — and I do personally — with inconsistencies in the Act which require differentiations between different segments of our society. Does that mean to say that those people from Aboriginal ancestry who are over 18 are far more knowledgeable of the justice system than those that are under

the age of 18.

Actually, when we think about it, Mr. Speaker, we're actually only talking about a very fine line here. Someone who's 18 is qualified to understand the justice system and someone who is 17 is unqualified to understand the justice system, so therefore they are able to attain legal services and courtworker assistance immediately upon the allegations of a crime.

Whereas, if they have the unfortunate opportunity to make the mistake and it's being alleged against them after they . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Thank you hon. member. Then once we move to the age of 18, all of a sudden they're far more knowledgeable of the justice system, so therefore what we can do then is exempt them.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden these people are kind of left out on their own not understanding all the ramifications of what's going . . . happening here with them; where in many cases, Mr. Speaker, these people are no more knowledgeable of the justice system when they're 18 as when they're 17. But apparently, Mr. Speaker, the justice system in this province believes quite highly that they do. And I think that's very unfortunate.

Now I think in this Act we need to take a look at some time in the future as to the creating some parity here. Certainly in our northern communities, those people up there have less opportunities to grab a full understanding of our justice system, Mr. Speaker. And maybe we need to step back here a minute and try to help them, everyone understand the ramifications of this type of a clause.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think at this time this clause needs to re-examined again. We are certainly going to give the Minister of Justice ample opportunity to explain to us why he's brought these clauses out in the manner that he has.

But I think it's also important here to remind ourselves what is the importance. What is it we're trying to accomplish? Are we trying to accomplish protection of those people who have a great deal of trouble understanding our legal system? Or are we trying to protect those people who are there to help those people who are having trouble understanding our legal system, who through some misfortune of their own have run up against the law?

So I think, Mr. Speaker, what's important here is that we try to look after those who are having a great deal of trouble in our legal system, and rather than protect those who are providing the legal services, we need to spend a little more time protecting those people who do not understand the legal system.

So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I would ask that we adjourn the debate on this Bill. Thank you.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 16

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 16 — The Justice Statutes (Consumer Protection) Amendment Act,**

2000 be now read a second time.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate having a few minutes to speak upon this Bill.

I believe that the Bill clarifies the legal framework for the long established practice whereby the registrar of the consumer protection branch under each of the amended Bills may arrange for the distribution of proceeds of a bond to a claimant. This is actually a good thing in it, Mr. Speaker, I believe as it will assure that consumers under these Acts are able to receive intended protection from the bonds without undertaking full court proceedings.

Subsequently, the following Acts must also be amended in order for these provisions to come into effect in The Motor Dealers Act, Direct Sellers Act, Collection Agents Act, Sale of Training Courses Act, and credit reporting Act.

These changes will set out that the registrar may direct any money recovered under a forfeited bond or realized for the sale of collateral security may be paid to such persons deemed by the registrar to be entitled to these monies.

And I also appreciate the part, Mr. Speaker, that there's also an appeal process put in place for the protection of the peoples involved.

Also these amendments appear to be a very positive step that is dealing with a very complex area of the law where the average consumer may not be completely aware of his rights, Mr. Speaker.

It is absolutely crucial that consumers are protected from such things as fraud, and in too many cases we have seen things like this happening. In many cases I believe, Mr. Speaker, quite often the victim seems to have less rights than the person committing the crime or committing the fraud the way our justice system is set up at the present time.

Having said these things, Mr. Speaker, I think we still have a number of members of the public that we would like to check with and get their opinion on this Bill, so at this time I would adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

(1130)

Bill No. 6

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 6 — The Mentally Disordered Persons Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Act to Amend the Mentally Disordered Persons Act is an interesting one, and I think it's an important one. There is a statement that I think is fairly important — that it says a society is often judged by how we deal with those people that are not as privileged as maybe some of the rest of us are. And I think when we deal with an Act like this that sort of thing comes into play in a very definite sort of a way.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, when I mentioned that opening statement, I have to recall that a number of years ago I visited a country in Western Europe . . . Eastern Europe, pardon me. And after having spent about three weeks there, the person that I was with asked a question if I had seen anything unusual. And I said, well, you know, aside from the scenery and the buildings and the architecture and all those sorts of things, nothing particularly unusual.

Then he said, well, you've probably noticed that you haven't seen any people with disabilities or mental disorders or any of that sorts of things out on the street — they were all out of sight. And I recalled, after that question was asked, that I hadn't seen one of those. And when you stop to think of that, it was little frightening that something had happened to all those people — they'd all been tucked away, they'd all been hidden someplace.

What is probably worthwhile noting, it was sort of a strongly socialist country that that happened in. And I think that indicates something very much about the whole socialist view on these sorts of things.

We look at this particular Act, Mr. Speaker, and we have to ask some very important questions. I think if we look at our experience over the past, there was a time that whenever you had mentally disordered persons around they were just put away someplace and put out of sight, even in our province of Saskatchewan. However, I think there have been people that have led the whole fight, led the whole movement to give some respect, responsibility, and dignity, Mr. Speaker, to people who are mentally disordered.

And I think of my particular constituency, and I'm very proud of some of the groups that have led that. I think back in the '40s when one of the . . . what used to be called the experimental stations came up for sale, a group of people in the area decided to purchase that and create a good home that will have much more of a home aspect to it than an institutional aspect to it. And that still exists in my community. It's known as the Mennonite youth farm. And, Mr. Speaker, it's had an excellent reputation across this province. It has set the standard in many cases for people taking care of those who are less fortunate.

And I think it would probably be a good time to recognize the individual that had the foresight, had the vision, and had the concern, a gentleman who's no longer with us, by the name of Henry Friesen, who basically had that vision, who said we need to take care of these people in a way that we hadn't taken care of them in this particular province.

Since that time and in more recent years, other communities in my constituency have sort of taken up the torch in that area and provided many facilities that would meet some of those needs. The Menno Home situation at Waldheim is another excellent example of the care and the consideration that's given.

And I believe that essentially most of the communities throughout my constituency have that sort of vision. From time to time, they've been able to access some government funding and that's appreciated where that's happened. But the vision has essentially come from the people within those communities.

As we look at this particular Act, Mr. Speaker, I think we must at all times recognize and respect the rights of the individual. And I think that's one of the concerns that I have when I look at Bill. No. 6.

The concerns that come out of that is if someone's declared competent — either by a psychiatrist or judge — you would think that was then final and that was the end of it. But according to this particular Bill, that's not the end of it. Those kinds of decisions and concerns could be ongoing without any length of time, without any limit of time that's out there.

And when we start to think about what that could lead to, Mr. Speaker — you have the people in our society who need the most support, the most help, and the least harassment — this particular Bill may allow for exactly the opposite. And I think we have to take some very careful . . . a very careful look at that to make sure that we keep the protection out there for the individuals that we want to protect.

With this proposed legislation, that particular decision that should be made either by a psychiatrist or a judge, can now be appealed to the Court of Queen's Bench either by a psychiatrist, a family member, or another individual who may be involved. And that's a pretty loose and open possibility there, Mr. Speaker. And I think that's where the scary parts of this particular Bill come to the front. It seems that almost anyone can appeal that particular decision.

There are people, Mr. Speaker, who fit into this particular category that have substantial financial assets. I know in my constituency, and I'm sure the other members of the House are in the same situation, where people in the past have willed to some of their family members some land, some property, some finances, to make sure that they would always be well taken care of. And I think we respect and we honour those kinds of concerns for family members.

However, once that's taken care of, then what happens with all those kinds of assets? How well are they taken care of? Who has access to them? And all of those questions come into play.

Now according to the direction of this particular Bill, it says a psychiatrist, a family member, or another individual who may be involved — and as I said, that's a very vague thing — can then go ahead and have this person reassessed time and time and time again. That ends up being a particular harassment situation.

Now the question may be asked, why would anyone wish to do that? Okay. Very simple. There are always people in our society, unfortunately, who are prepared to prey on other individuals. And if someone can be assessed as this particular Bill indicates, other individuals may then decide they have some access to that particular . . . to those finances or to that property. And I think that's where the concern lies in this particular Bill.

When that appeal is made, Mr. Speaker, both a medical and a psychiatric exam, or both, can be ordered. Now I would imagine at first blush we would say, well there's no problem with that particularly. And maybe if it only happened one time, that might be okay.

But it does not deal with the real concern. What is not in this particular Bill — Bill No. 6 — is a statement about how decently we deal with the persons in this situation, how much respect we give to them. And I think that, Mr. Speaker, deserves a very close analysis.

Now interestingly enough, the individual then must submit to those exams as ordered. Well I would imagine if somebody has that first request that's made, we would probably say, well that's fair enough; that's fine. But these things can be reapplied for. The exams can just keep on going. There doesn't seem to be any limit according to Bill No. 6 to the number of exams that take place. This can happen again and again.

It also seems that the individual in question does not really have a choice in the matter. And I think, Mr. Speaker, that's also a concern. I think they should have some access, some opportunity to go ahead and voice their own concerns. And as I mentioned right at the very start, a society is always judged by how it treats those who are most . . . have the most misfortune in their lives. And I think we need to look at that.

The question is: are their rights recognized? Are their rights being respected? And so, Mr. Speaker, as we look at Bill No. 6, there are many questions and concerns that we have. And we will want to make sure that all the people that are involved, that should be involved, the legal society, families that maybe involved, all are represented in this.

And to that extent and to looking forward to the research that needs to take place, I would now like to adjourn debate on this Bill No. 6.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 7

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Boyd that **Bill No. 7 — The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Student Assistance and Student Aid Fund. Most of the amendments in the Bill are pretty standard, mostly housekeeping in nature. But since the budget this government has claimed that they want to renew their commitment to post-secondary education. Unfortunately what we have recently seen with the cancellation of programs is just the contrary.

One of the biggest obstacles, Mr. Speaker, that students face upon graduating from grade 12 is whether or not they want to further their education, and one of the biggest barriers is how are they going to finance it. Now it's interesting in today's world we talk about graduating . . . what we're going to do after our youth graduate from grade 12.

It wasn't long ago that many of our parents and relatives only looked at going to school till grade 8, 9, or even 10 was a luxury. Now we're talking about grade 12 and beyond. And in this age of global economy and high technology, computers and Internet, it's a virtual necessity that our students and our youth get more than a grade 12 and go on to post-secondary

education. So it's very important that we assist our students in this area.

As we have seen through further scrutiny of this budget, this government has actually cancelled the program that many students relied on for summer employment to help pay for their education. And it's interesting that the government talks about renewing their commitment to post-secondary education while cancelling a very important program for our youth.

But I would like to talk about this government's promise during the election campaign to pay for first-year students' tuition. What happened to that promise? Or was that just more political rhetoric? Is that just another broken promise from this budget?

Mr. Speaker, upon graduation from their chosen fields of study, students incur exorbitant debt loads from loans they have received over the course of study. But the NDP did not really do anything to acknowledge this except for a measly tax credit, which in actuality does not amount to anything, since they also repealed the interest-free status on student loans.

Now just like the budget the government brought down, one hand they lower taxes and the other hand, they raise taxes. They put money in people's pockets with one hand and take the money out of the other pocket with the other hand. And they've done the same thing with the education of our youth. They promise a tax rebate with one hand, and the other hand they take it away by eliminating the interest-free status.

In the minister's speech regarding this Bill, he spoke about improving financial accessibility to funding for students. But with the cancellation of the programs, it appears that they are hindering the process more than facilitating it.

Another concern is what sort of job opportunities will there be for graduating students to stay in Saskatchewan when they finish school and have to pay back thousands of dollars in student loans. More of our best and brightest will be leaving Saskatchewan for Alberta, with the recent announcement of the Canadian Bible College leaving Regina.

Mr. Speaker, I find it ironic when the members opposite claim that they are not willing to mortgage their children's future, when it is them who have managed to take away scholarship money from students when they receive funding from the Canadian millennium scholarship fund. And again, this is something the government has that really deceived our youth. They learned of this millennium scholarship fund; they went out and applied for it. But in the end they did not receive any benefit from it. The government took their scholarship.

It is very difficult to comprehend how this government can go on and on about investing in the future when they are doing everything possible to stifle students' productivity.

(1145)

As Saskatchewan is dealing with a brain drain, this government has done little or nothing to address this very serious problem. Students have left our province in droves and all we are left with is reading about the successes elsewhere. It is just typical of the NDP to talk about their commitment to students in the

future in our province, when in actuality they have done more to hold back our youth.

Recent example is of the cancellation of the student program employment as I mentioned earlier. Many students rely on this program to assist in paying for their education and pay down some of their student loan debt. The private businesses that the member opposite brings into the debate also count on this program as a means to hire local students and give them some real-world experience.

And it's very important that students not only get the financial rewards of working in summer programs, summer jobs, so they don't have to incur too many loans and debt and have a decent standard of living while they are going to university. But it also gives the student much needed experience working on jobs whether it's in their field that they are studying in or not; just the experience of working and doing a good job . . . but it also helps the employers of Saskatchewan.

In the summertime many employers, farmers, and non-farmers, need students and rely on their labours. And unfortunately this program has cut into that. But also the students have had to worry about the cancellation of the interest-free portion of the student loan repayment program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this plan has put added pressure onto our students; and upon graduating from the university or trade schools, they now have to start paying interest immediately. And this puts a great amount of pressure on these students to have a well-paying job lined up right after graduation.

And naturally, as in many cases we have seen, these students look where the best opportunity for jobs are and unfortunately it is elsewhere. It's not in Saskatchewan. And because of the added pressure of needing employment immediately, they go where the best opportunities are and that's usually, unfortunately, Alberta or elsewhere.

One thing the government has to look at and not only help student employment but just employment for students after they graduate from their university or trade school, is developing opportunities in Saskatchewan.

And again and again we've heard that especially in rural Saskatchewan, the infrastructure is falling apart. When a business is looking to invest, build a factory, put up a business, they look at a community and they have to look at some very important aspects. First, infrastructure such as roads and highways — will they be able to get their products in and out and their raw materials in and out of the community?

Of course they look at the education system. Is it an adequate education system for their employees' children and their own children? The health care in the community — is it adequate health care? And of course taxation. Taxation is a big problem when setting up a business when you're competing with other jurisdictions, not only local taxes but also the provincial tax which is involved.

Now there is no doubt that the members opposite will talk about the fact it was them that offered free tuition to first-year students. And they will talk about the fact they have gave

graduating students a \$353 tax credit. But it does not amount to anything if they don't stay in Saskatchewan and take advantage of this. So this is another program that will likely not be taken up because the students will have to leave the province to get a job and they will not be eligible for the tax break.

But it's not only the post-secondary students that have been hurt by this government. K to 12 education has been grossly underfunded by this government to the tune of \$380 million. And again it goes back to what the taxpayer can pay at the local level. And again we have seen a lack of attention in the budget. And I attended many, many tax revolt meetings, and people said before the budget that they can not stand any more taxes.

And we have to look at K to 12 education. We talk about post-secondary education. We need our youth to be properly educated in the earlier grades so they can go on and take their courses and classes and have the skills to learn in the university classes. And we have to look at many things in the K to 12 system. We must keep our students in school to begin with so they graduate from grade 12. And we need . . . and unfortunately a lot of it has to do with funding.

And I would just like to read a bit from the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association news release. And just in summary, what Mr. Shaddock says:

If we are not careful, our education system is going to crumble, and therefore so will the future of our province. If we shortchange our children now, we shortchange ourselves in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

The Speaker: — Order. Why is the member on his feet?

Mr. Wartman: — Leave to bring Easter greetings.

Leave granted.

STATEMENT BY A MEMBER

Easter Greetings

Mr. Wartman: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I thought we were going to be doing these greetings during members' statements and I was going to be asking leave at that point for 20 minutes in that I don't often get a chance to preach any more, and I thought this might be a good chance for me. But I've trimmed it a little bit.

Mr. Speaker, spring is the time of new life and new beginnings. The season of Lent is a time of contemplation, preparation, and commitment, a season which culminates in joyous reaffirmation of life and love. The promise of eternal love is at the very heart of the Easter celebration.

Today is Holy Thursday and it marks the final weekend of the Easter season. Even though the legislature is not generally a forum for discussing religious issues, the significance of Easter has influence beyond any specific creed.

For many, Easter is a time of greatest hope. It is a time when we celebrate love beyond measure, the triumph of life over death, of good over evil. It is a time when we take a break in our temporal activities, time to catch our breath, time to visit with our families, time to prepare ourselves to return to our duties with renewed energy, renewed vigour, and renewed hope. For all who observe this holiday and for those who just get a longer weekend, we hope that it's a time of renewal.

I pray that God will continue to bless and guide all of us through this Easter weekend and through the days and years ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Weekes: — To ask leave to give a Easter greeting.

Leave granted.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Easter season is a time for renewal, a time in which to renew our Christian beliefs in the passion and death of our Saviour. It is through his death that we may receive our salvation.

The Easter season is a sign of new life and new beginning. With this in mind, let us all renew our pledge to work towards a more just society, a society where all mankind can stand side by each as all work towards God's kingdom.

A blessed Easter season to all and may we find the peace of Christ in our hearts. It also gives me a great deal of pleasure, Mr. Speaker, to join with our Jewish friends and neighbours in wishing everyone a joyous Passover celebration. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Thank you, hon. members. I too, if I may, I've been asked on behalf of the hon. member for Canora-Pelly, asked to convey some wishes on his behalf. And I trust you would allow me leave to do so.

Leave granted.

Greetings from the Member for Canora-Pelly

The Speaker: — The hon. member from Canora-Pelly would like to extend greetings and a Happy Easter to all. He is now out of the hospital, with good reports from his doctors. He wants to express his sincere thanks for the telephone calls, for the visits, the cards, the wishes that he's received from MLAs, caucus staff, and employees of the Legislative Assembly.

He will be returning home to Invermay for a recovery period, and looks forward to his return to this House as soon as possible. And he wishes everyone Godspeed and God bless.

And I know that if the member was here he would acknowledge the Ukrainian community. I can't quite keep up to that level of communication as the hon. member from Canora-Pelly so I won't endeavour that.

But I too would like to extend to each and every member, to you and your families, to enjoy the spirit of this special time of year in whichever way you may choose to celebrate, to enjoy with your families, your friends, your loved ones. And I do look forward to seeing you back again next week.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I move this House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — As I say, I look forward to seeing you all when we reconvene at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday next. Happy Easter!

The Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.

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