

The Assembly met at 1:30 p.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This afternoon I rise on behalf of several citizens of the province of Saskatchewan opposed to private sales exemption of \$3,000, 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.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And the signatories to this petition come from the community of Humboldt.

Mr. Heppner: — Mr. Speaker, I too rise to present a petition signed by the good people from Elfros, Regina, Foam Lake, all around the province, and they're concerned about the government's misthought budget, and I read 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 with the opportunity to pass on the savings to their customers.

I so present.

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too rise today to present petitions from people in our good province of Saskatchewan that would like to see the exemption of the PST (provincial sales tax) on private sales under \$3,000 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

The signators on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from the good community of Humboldt.

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today against forced municipal amalgamation:

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 the forced amalgamation

of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

The people that have signed this petition are from Wadena and Foam Lake.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of citizens expressing a concern about the high cost 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 from the communities of Choceland, Kinistino, Archerwill, Prince Albert, and Melfort.

I so present.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well to present petitions regarding the fuel tax, and reading the prayer:

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.

Mr. Speaker, the petitions I present are signed by individuals from the communities of Melfort, Kinistino, Naicam, and St. Brieux.

I so present.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition in regards to 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 per litre, cost shared by both levels of government.

And the signatures are from Unity, North Battleford, and also Kerrobert.

I so present.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I also stand today to present petitions on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens concerned about the high cost of fuel. And the petition 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.

And this is signed by folks from Macoun and Estevan.

I so present. Thank you.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again on behalf of people in Swift Current and area concerned about their hospital. And, Mr. Speaker, the prayer could be summarized with the following sentiment, that the petition calls on the provincial government to assist in the regeneration plan for the Swift Current regional hospital by providing approximately 7.54 million, allowing the Swift Current Health District to provide improved health care services.

This petition is signed by the people in Swift Current, Mr. Speaker.

I so present.

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition of citizens who are opposed to enforced 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 forced amalgamation of municipalities in Saskatchewan.

And it's signed by constituents of Swift Current.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, I present a petition on behalf of residents of Saskatchewan opposed to private sales exemption of \$3,000. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that the 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 as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

These petitions are signed from people in Regina, Regina Beach area.

I so present.

Mr. Brkich: — Mr. Speaker, I have 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.

The petitioners are from Davidson, Saskatoon, Regina, Girvin, Bladworth, Martensville, Estevan, Swift Current. There's even a signature from Petalon, Turkey, who thinks this is a good

idea, and we pay too much tax here in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the private sale 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 the signatures on this petition, Mr. Speaker, are from White City, Yorkton, and Foam Lake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too 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.

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

This petition is signed by the good folks of Prince Albert, Saskatoon, and Perdue, Mr. Speaker. I so present.

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.

These are petitions of the citizens of the province petitioning the Assembly on the following matters:

To provide a \$3,000 exemption of the PST for dealers on the purchase of vehicles;

To grandfather vehicles that were tax paid on budget day;

To halt plans to proceed with the amalgamation of municipalities;

To provide funding for Swift Current Regional Hospital;

And to reduce fuel taxes.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on Friday next move first reading of The Democratic Unionism Act.

And also on standing, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on

Friday next move first reading of The Trade Union Amendment Act, 2000 (Freedom of Speech in the Workplace).

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Romanow: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask your indulgence, sir, and the indulgence of my colleagues to make a somewhat lengthier introduction if I may.

I want to ask leave of the Assembly to welcome a truly distinguished and accomplished Canadian who is seated in your gallery, Dr. A.W. (Al) Johnson. And I'll just ask him to remain seated for a moment because this will take a little time.

Joining Dr. Johnson is another familiar face, former deputy minister of Agriculture for the province of Saskatchewan, Professor Hartley Furtan, from the University of Saskatchewan; and Saskatchewan's deputy minister of Finance, Dr. Paul Boothe. I'll be inviting all members to join me in welcoming these guests today but before I do I'd like to ask the Assembly's indulgence, as I say, to make an extended — not too extended — statement in recognition of Al Johnson's many accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, members of the legislature will recall the commitment in the 1999 Throne Speech to appoint a special adviser on agricultural policy to assist Saskatchewan in dealing with the long-term challenges and opportunities facing this important economic sector. That commitment was made as part of the determination to maintain a role — a strong role — in this very important field of public policy.

Later today my colleague, the Minister of Finance, will be announcing the establishment of the A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy, a position that will formalize the obligation which I've referred to in this regard and strengthen our ability to attract Canada's brightest and best public policy advisers right here to Saskatchewan.

I'm pleased to advise the Assembly that the first occupant of that Chair will be Professor Hartley Furtan who will serve as special adviser on agricultural issues and provide support to the province at the next round of international trade talks. And the Minister of Finance will further elaborate following question period.

My main purpose in introduction of guests, however, is to just say that this Chair and this announcement is a reflection of the commitment to excellence in public policy that Dr. Al Johnson has bestowed upon us; and has given us the privilege, the honour of using his name in so determining this Chair and establishing it.

I've said many times, and firmly believe, that service to the public is among the most noble and worthy of professions and nobody in my estimation more clearly exemplifies those values than Al Johnson. Here we have an individual who spent a lifetime dedicated to furthering sound public policy in Saskatchewan and in Canada as a whole — in areas ranging from finance to national health and welfare.

One who has taken his talents to the international stage, providing nations like Indonesia and South Africa the benefit of his expertise at the very highest levels. One who throughout his esteemed career has won accolades, awards, and tributes for his many achievements.

Mr. Speaker, it's particularly worthy to note that Dr. Al Johnson began that career right here in Saskatchewan. A Saskatchewan boy, born and raised in Insinger, he received bachelor degrees in political science and history from the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) and then went on to achieve an M.A. (Master of Arts) in public administration from the University of Toronto. And two further degrees from Harvard — a masters in Public Administration, and a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy) in Political Economy. As he told me this morning over coffee, at Harvard he had a little time to think.

Upon his return to Saskatchewan he joined the provincial Budget Bureau at the ripe old age of 28, became Deputy Provincial Treasurer — one of Canada's youngest ever to hold a deputy minister's position anywhere.

The Provincial Treasurer of the day was the Hon. C. M. Clarence Fines, who said this about Al Johnson's appointment, quote:

His example should serve as an inspiration to our young people in realizing that there is room at the top for those who have been well trained and have given outstanding service.

Mr. Speaker, for some achieving the top position in finance of a large organization like the provincial government might in itself be the apex of a fine career, and it is; but not for Al Johnson, it was only the beginning.

Following 12 years as deputy Provincial Treasurer, Al Johnson accepted positions with the federal government serving amongst other positions during his tenure as the assistant deputy minister of Finance, economic adviser to the Prime Minister, Treasury Board secretary, and deputy minister of National Health and Welfare.

In 1975 he moved outside executive government to become president of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the CBC. And seven years later, took his wealth of talent and experience back to the academic world, this time as a professor, a fellow, and advisor at Queen's, University of Toronto, and the Canadian Centre for Management Development.

His achievements are outstanding, and I would say greatly appreciated by a grateful nation. And this nation acknowledges it, because he has been recognized with the Order of Canada, the Vanier Medal from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada, a gold medal from the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, and honorary degrees from the universities of Regina, Mount Allison, and Queen's.

As all of us look to the future of our province and our nation, I can think of no better example of serving the public with integrity and professionalism and dedication than that that has been offered by our special guest, Al Johnson. And with the highly respected name of Dr. Al Johnson attached to our newly

created Chair, we recognize a contribution and a contribution of the civil service.

And also, I believe we can look forward to a second plus, the attraction to this civil service of people with research and advise and an eye to the future to define public policy to this province and Canada well into the new century, the 21st century.

So, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and the members for the extended invitation and I would ask now all members to join me in warmly welcoming Al Johnson and asking him to stand in recognition of his many and valued contributions to Saskatchewan, Canada, and the world. Dr. Al Johnson.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I too would like to welcome our guests, as the Premier has already done, to the Assembly; to Professor Furtan, to Dr. Boothe and particularly to Dr. A.W. Johnson who has had a long and distinguished career. The distinguished position now of the Chair of Public Policy I believe is very fitting for Dr. Johnson and we certainly support the fact that his name is associated with this esteemed position.

He started his career in Saskatchewan and I must say he looks surprisingly well for having gone back to the days of C.M. Fines and having had to work with all those CCF (Co-operative Commonwealth Federation) and NDP (New Democratic Party) governments. It speaks to the quality of his character and his strength.

He though has gone on from the province of Saskatchewan and has served Canada and served the world and obviously needs to be commended on those remarkable accomplishments.

Mr. Johnson has received many distinguished awards, and the official opposition takes the opportunity to thank Dr. Al Johnson for his many contributions in so many outstanding and notable initiatives that he has undertaken.

So on behalf of the official opposition, congratulations and welcome to the Assembly, Dr. Johnson.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, the four most favourite people in the world to me who I love and cherish. And their presence here should remind each one of us as to why we are in this Chamber. And that's to go before and make the world a better place for our children and for our families.

So in the west gallery, would you please welcome my wife, Karen, and our three boys, David, Eric, and Connor.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, it's truly an honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly, my three daughters who are seated in your gallery — Crystal, Shannon, and Lindsay. Would you please join me in

welcoming them here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Jones: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, a constituent of mine and a former colleague of many of the members with us here, a distinguished career in this House; please welcome behind me — behind the bar — John Brockelbank.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a very special day for me as I have the opportunity to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, my family.

My wife, Leona, starting — I'll have everyone stand up — starting with my wife, Leona, an employee of the Pasqua Health District; my daughter, Carla, who's just had some new-found independence acquiring a driver's licence and a new car; my daughter, Krystal, who is the artist in the family and I have her paintings proudly on display in my office; and my son, Tyrrell, our resident Pokémon expert.

And, Mr. Speaker, you'll be interested to know my son had two requests on the way here yesterday, neither of which I can understand very well. One was to get a pack of Pokémon cards, the other was he wanted an opportunity to be able to meet the Premier. So I told him I might be able to arrange the Pokémon cards but I wasn't sure about the other.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the legislature, two special guests of ours who are here today. The president of our party, Bill Allen, seated in your gallery, and the executive secretary to our party, Steven Bobiash, also seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, it's nice to see Bill here again. For many of you who may not be aware, Bill served in this Assembly and is certainly no stranger. He served here from 1991 . . . sorry, 1971 to 1982, I think, and was a former constituent of mine. It's nice to see him back here — Bill, and Steve. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly, 60 cadets from the 723 Moose Mountain Squadron in Carlyle. Also communities such as Redvers, Manor, Arcola, and Kisbey are part of this squadron.

But special guests, Mr. Speaker, of the 60 include 26 members of the No. 2565 Army Cadet Corps from Spaniard's Bay, Newfoundland. They're here on an exchange tour, Mr. Speaker, and I would ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would

also like to join with my colleague, the member from Souris-Cannington, to welcome the cadets, and just to let them know I believe we have some of the cadets from the Langbank-Kennedy area down there as well.

I have been pleased to have addressed this cadet group, and I'd like to welcome each and every one of them. It's certainly a pleasure to have them in the Assembly, and to ask the members to again join with me in welcoming these cadets.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Hon. members, if I may be permitted. I do have some guests in the Assembly from our good neighbours to the South. I would like to introduce them here who are in the Speaker's gallery and in the Chamber. They are from the Mount Pleasant Baptist Church in Carolton, Georgia, USA (United States of America), which is about an hour's drive west of Atlanta near the Alabama state line. They are here to volunteer their missionary services to the Discovery Baptist Church here in Regina. They are accompanied by Pastor Larry Spencer of Discovery Baptist Church.

I know that all members will want to join me in wishing them an enjoyable and productive visit here to our great province and to the city of Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

First Nations Annual Winter Games

Ms. Julé: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last Friday I had the distinct pleasure of attending the opening ceremonies of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations 20th Annual Winter Games taking place in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, over 2,000 athletes are participating in six athletic events during the winter games, including broomball, badminton, boys and girls' hockey, volleyball, and soccer.

Mr. Speaker, this marks the first time that the games are being held in Saskatoon, and teams and individuals from each of the 11 tribal councils are competing.

Mr. Speaker, these games provide a great deal of enjoyment through athletic competition, but there's also a significant spiritual and cultural component as this is the first year that the medals will be handed out in the youth category for the powwow, which is a featured event being held early this week.

I also feel that it is noteworthy to mention that all of the athletes and participants in the games must abide by a strict code of ethics, teaching the youth respect for themselves and for their fellow athletes. Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) on their wonderful work on coordinating these games, and I wish all of the athletes the very best of luck in their respective sports. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

First Nations Winter Games

Hon. Mr. Goulet: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, I want to join in and announce to the Assembly this week that the city of Saskatoon has been proud to welcome the 21st annual Saskatchewan First Nations Winter Games. The games were initiated to promote First Nations youth involvement in sport, culture and recreation. In Cree we say, "Soogi kuwes tu metuwechik" — to play with strength and fairness.

More important, Mr. Speaker, the games are designed to allow 2,300 athletes between the ages of 8 and 18 to have a great deal of fun by competing against their peers in the sports of hockey, broomball, volleyball, badminton. This year the demonstration sport is indoor soccer.

The five-day event has been held in Saskatchewan Place. Chief Joe Quewezance and the Saskatoon Tribal Council are to be congratulated for organizing and hosting the games. As well, Chief Darcy Bear of Whitecap Dakota First Nation is the Chair of the 2000 First Nations Winter Games.

Mr. Speaker, the opening ceremonies on Monday were spectacular with dignitaries and attendants including National Chief Phil Fontaine, FSIN Chief Perry Bellegarde, colleagues from the legislature as well as elders, veterans, participants and their families. These games are good for young athletes, good for the host city, good for sport in general, and good for promoting public awareness and support of First Nations talent.

Thank you.

Tape geechi, meegwach and Marsi choo.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Gardiner Dam Terminal

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure I rise today to inform the members of the Assembly of a project in my constituency — the Gardiner dam terminal. It's a joint venture between local investors and Agricore.

This terminal is unique in the fact it'll be 50 per cent owned by local farmers and investors. Mr. Speaker, this means that the terminal will be run by the people who know the most about the agriculture industry — the farmers. The head office will be located at the terminal, where it should be, not in some huge corporate building in another province.

Mr. Speaker, this terminal will provide many benefits for the Gardiner dam communities. It will ensure the retention of the CPR (Canadian Pacific Railway) rail line. It will increase tax revenues for the local municipal governments. Once in operation, the terminal will employ approximately 12 full-time employees.

These benefits have translated into renewed sense of economic optimism in the area. Construction on the project is expected to begin in June of this year. The facility is expected to be ready for farmer deliveries in the summer, year 2001. The terminal is expected to handle up to 150,000 tonnes of grain per year and will be able to clean grain to export standards.

Mr. Speaker, this is an excellent example of how rural Saskatchewan can band together to become economically viable if given the proper tools. Mr. Speaker, rural Saskatchewan can grow and thrive.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Prince Albert Business Awards

Hon. Mr. Lautermilch: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I too want to join in sharing the mood of optimism, and this comes from my home community of Prince Albert.

I was fortunate enough to attend the annual business recognition, the Samuel McLeod Awards, and I want to say that it was very much a celebration of outstanding businesses and individuals who have made contributions to Prince Albert and Saskatchewan in the past year.

Carolynny Sprouts won for the best new product or service. Boston Pizza was recognized as the best new business. P A Janitorial . . . (inaudible) . . . factory outlet won the service industry category. And in the category of marketing, Rod's Decorating Service was chosen.

Fresh Air Experience was awarded for its community involvement; and Wapawekka Lumber won in two categories, for investment and for job creation. The business of the year, Mr. Speaker, was the Prince Albert Credit Union.

And finally, a very important award, the legacy award, designated to celebrate the contributions of business persons to the community over the years was to a very deserving candidate, Mr. Ab Pellegrini of Leon's Furniture.

I want to congratulate all of the finalists. I want to thank all of the sponsors for their involvement. But most of all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the business community of Prince Albert for their faith in their community and their faith in our province. They deserve to be very proud of each other. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Pasqua Regional Park Wins Award

Mr. Kwiatkowski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very fortunate in Carrot River Valley to have four regional parks in our constituency. And the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association has named one of them, the Pasqua Regional Park which is located on Highway No. 23 between Carrot River and Arborfield, as the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association park of the year.

The award was presented by Mr. Gillis MacDonald, president of the Saskatchewan Regional Parks Association during their annual conference held April 13, 14, 15 in Saskatoon. The annual award is a major achievement in which all Pasqua park board members, staff, volunteers, and local residents can be very proud.

The award was granted on the basis of board effort and effectiveness, volunteer support in park operations, community

support of contributing bodies, recent park developments and enhancements, potential for further expanding tourism opportunities.

And the Pasqua Regional Park board chairperson Richard Colborn noted that the award was a particular honour given the number of exceptional regional parks in the province. And Colborn went on to commend past board members and volunteers for making the Pasqua Regional Park what it is today.

Just an interesting note, Mr. Speaker. The Pasqua Regional Park is near the site of the paleontological discovery of prehistoric bony fish, sharks, birds, turtles, and a skeleton discovery of a 92-year-old crocodilian named Big Bert.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Administrative Professionals' Day

Mr. Kasperski: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today is Administrative Professionals' Day. You might ask yourself, what exactly is Administrative Professionals' Day? Here's a hint. It used to be called, Mr. Speaker, Secretaries' Day.

But as we all know, Mr. Speaker, secretaries do much more than purely secretarial tasks. This is why a changing profession deserves a change in name — a new name that more accurately reflects the demands placed on administrative professionals.

During the information age, Mr. Speaker, administrative professionals are doing more and more for all of us. They are becoming our information managers. Behind every successful office, there is an efficient unit of administrative support staff making those of us fortunate enough to have support, look good. Administrative professionals go that extra mile to make our offices run smoothly.

Though we are thankful for the support of our administrative professionals every day, we do not often acknowledge just how much they contribute to the efficient running of our office. Today is the day when we can openly and officially express our gratitude to our administrative professionals.

Today we also acknowledge that teamwork is essential and that no one person is more important than another. It takes a concerted effort for things to run smoothly in any office.

On behalf of all my colleagues, Mr. Speaker, I wish to express our gratitude and appreciation for the work of our administrative professionals.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Recognition of Choiceland Volunteers

Mr. Wiberg: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise this afternoon so that I can bring recognition to two of my constituents. Mr. Speaker, I had the honour of attending an evening of recognition in Choiceland, sponsored by the Saskatchewan housing authority, last Tuesday, April 18.

At this gala event, Mr. Speaker, Ronald Smith and Robert Walker, two Choiceland area farmers, were honoured for 10 years of voluntary services, the Choiceland and District Housing Authority.

Mr. Speaker, these two gentlemen have given tirelessly of their time in the last 10 years. Not only have they contributed time unselfishly at the board meetings, but have served hundreds of hours in ensuring that every local event sponsored by the local housing authority has run smoothly to the benefit of the local residents, and assisting whenever needed when an extra hand is required to maintain the housing complexes.

Mr. Speaker, it is people such as Ronald and Robert whose unwavering efforts to help those who are in need makes us all proud to live in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, volunteerism is one of the backbones of our province. Volunteerism is a necessity to the survival of both rural and urban Saskatchewan. Without volunteers like Ronald Smith and Robert Walker, Saskatchewan would be a lesser place to live. And I am proud to know these two gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that everyone in this Assembly to please join me in recognizing Mr. Robert Walker and Mr. Ronald Smith, chairman and vice-chairman respectively of the Choiceland and District Housing Authority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

ORAL QUESTIONS

Parolees at Regina Community Correction Centre

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today my question is for the Minister of Justice. Mr. Speaker, there is great concern in the city of Regina and indeed across the province, with the news that violent offenders from Alberta are being sent to a halfway house here in Regina. Two of these parolees have recently been charged with armed robberies which occurred in this city.

Mr. Speaker, the Oskana Centre is located right in the heart of Regina. It is the only central, federal community correctional centre for parolees from Alberta and Saskatchewan to go to because last summer the last community correctional centre in Alberta converted to a residential centre and can now refuse to take violent offenders.

Mr. Minister, since Oskana became the only centralized CCC (community correctional centre) last summer, have you contacted the federal government about increasing pressure . . . about the increased pressures this is putting on our system, and about new concerns facing our community?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me thank the member for his question. The member should be assured that all necessary precautions have been made to ensure the safety of the community here in Regina.

The fact that Alberta doesn't have adequate facilities says

something I think about the approach that Alberta is taking to . . . for the provision of services to ensure that people can be attended to in the community.

Mr. Speaker, the government of course is forever dealing with the federal government on matters of justice as we . . . as our jurisdictions overlap, and we'll continue to do that. And I would, Mr. Speaker, just point out in passing, as we all know in the last election, Mr. Speaker, the party opposite campaigned on zero funding increases for Justice, Mr. Speaker. That is not the way we've approached things on this side of the House.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rather saddened by the minister's flippant answer.

Mr. Speaker, Regina citizens have been victimized in a string of armed robberies carried out by violent offenders from another province. Enforcement officials believe that the justice system in this province is busy enough with our own offenders — let alone those from another jurisdiction.

They also believe that if a parolee is going to reoffend — and this is important — they are likely, they are more likely, to do so in a location where they have no links to the community.

Mr. Speaker, a community correctional centre to help parolees reintegrate can be a benefit to society, but it is unfair that we be the only location for violent offenders coming out of the federal system in Alberta as well as Saskatchewan. And even though this may be considered a federal justice problem, when these people reoffend in our province, in this city, it becomes our problem as well.

My question, Mr. Minister, what has your department done to address the greater strain that accepting the responsibilities for these parolees has put on the Saskatchewan justice system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, let me just reiterate the kinds of commitments this government has made to the justice system and to the criminal justice system in particular; contrary, Mr. Speaker, to the zero commitment of the party opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we have a commitment of 200 police officers through the term of this government, Mr. Speaker, \$16 million a year; zero from the party opposite.

Mr. Speaker, we've got major commitments to corrections. Another million dollars a year in that system, Mr. Speaker. Supports to families. Mr. Speaker, across the piece, this party, this government has stood up for the criminal justice system, stood up for the safety of Saskatchewan residents. We'll continue to do so, unlike the party opposite.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, the minister is giving a political stump speech when we're concerned about crimes that are occurring here in Regina.

Mr. Speaker, since the last ccc (community correction centre) in Alberta converted to a residential centre, the federal government has been attempting to re-establish another community correction centre in that province. But they keep running into massive opposition from the residents of neighbourhoods that they consider. The people there don't want violent offenders in their neighbourhoods.

And I think the people of Regina would probably say the same thing. It's quite ironic that while our best and brightest young entrepreneurs head west to Alberta, we in turn take that province's violent criminals, and at what cost to security and well-being of our own citizens and our justice system?

Mr. Minister, will you — with haste and with diligence — work with your Alberta counterpart to lobby the federal government for an early establishment of a community correctional centre in Alberta to house their violent offenders and take pressure off the Oskana Centre and the community of Regina? Will you do that, Mr. Minister?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Axworthy: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should realize that there are transfers of offenders across this country, from province to province. There are offenders from Saskatchewan who go to Alberta to serve their time, Mr. Speaker. This is not, this is not an unusual kind of occurrence, Mr. Speaker, and the member should not be generating uncertainty and fearmongering in the population at large, Mr. Speaker.

There are constantly discussions around the nature of housing criminals, Mr. Speaker. That will continue. The member can be assured of it.

And the member can be assured and Saskatchewan residents can be assured that this government is committed to addressing the concerns of citizens' safety and security. That's why there are 200 new police officers, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Labour Relations in the Farm Implement Industry

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Labour. Madam Minister, there was a meeting last night in Humboldt of people who think your unfair labour laws are hurting the farm implement industry. The headline in the latest PIMA (Prairie Implement Manufacturers Association) newsletter says it all:

Annaheim today, Minot tomorrow. Doepker Industries in Annaheim is now thinking about moving to the US. Others may follow. Implement manufacturers say unions are being certified without a secret ballot and without employees hearing both sides of the issue.

Madam Minister, what are you doing to fix your unfair labour laws, laws that may drive thousands of jobs out of Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start out first of all by adding a little bit of information to this point, and that's that we've had the same labour laws since 1944 in the province. So this is not a particularly new concept.

But the other thing I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the Department of Labour believes that labour peace is crucial for economic growth and development, and the fact of the matter is we have staff within the department who can assist both workers and employers in resolving disputes, mediating disputes, and to create a positive labour environment within an unionized environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Party supports the workers' right to join a union. However, workers should also have the right to be fully aware of the implications of this decision by hearing both sides of the issue. Right now employers are not even allowed to speak to employees during a certification drive.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Party has given notice of a Bill entitled the freedom of speech in the workplace Act. This Bill will allow employers to speak to employees doing a union drive. They will still not be allowed to coerce employees in any way.

Madam Minister, workers need to hear both sides of the issue in order to make an informed decision. Will you support this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll just point out a little bit of the workings of the Labour Relations Board. It's a quasi-judicial body — 50 per cent of the representatives are employers who are recommended by the employer community, 50 per cent are employees who are recommended by the labour community. And together they look at the facts of any certification drive and they rule on whether it was conducted fairly.

Now as to the matter of information to the workers, Mr. Speaker, certainly people are available at the department to inform people of their rights, both the employees and the employers. And again to insist . . . to assist with a peaceful and co-operative resolution in the common interest of economic growth. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, the union at Doepker Industries was certified without a secret ballot. As you know, emotions in the workplace can run pretty high during a union drive. Workers may not feel they have the right to freely express their views. That right can only be protected through a secret ballot.

Madam Minister, if a majority of workers vote in a secret ballot to join a union, then we fully support that decision. But workers deserve the right to that secret ballot.

Madam Minister, the Saskatchewan Party has given notice of a Bill entitled the democratic unionism Act. This Bill will ensure a worker's right to a secret ballot. Will you support this legislation?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Well I'm concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the member opposite has made two allegations today. He's implied that the Labour Relations Board is not a fair and unbiased body; he's also implied that unions are not democratic bodies. And I would just assure the member that we have both a democratic process with a long-standing history since 1944.

And I think people should be cautious about trashing the rights of people within an environment that certainly is an emotional one. And again, I offer our department's services in helping to restore labour peace within that environment.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, you know that PIMA is very concerned about this issue. They have made a lengthy submission to your government detailing their concerns.

In their submission PIMA says, employer free speech has been virtually extinguished. They cite numerous examples of unfair, harmful Labour Board rulings. Then they call on your government to take immediate action.

Madam Minister, what action is your government taking to address these concerns, specifically the employers' right to free speech and the employees' right to a secret ballot?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I'll speak a little bit to the process. In a certification drive it's my understanding that every worker must sign a card, that the signatures are verified; and at the hearing in front of the Labour Relations Board, both the employer and the employees have the ability to put forward unfair labour practices if there's been any undue interference in the appropriate process.

Again, and I affirm, Mr. Speaker, it's been . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Sitting as close as I am to the hon. minister, I can hardly hear because of the noise from on both sides. Please allow the questions to be asked and the answers to be given.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — And as to the PIMA matter, I've certainly indicated that I would be willing to meet with them and to look at their concerns. There may be a way that we may improve the communications around people's rights in a bargaining environment. And you can always improve your ability to inform people of democratic process.

So again, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's in everybody's interest to, instead of creating a tension, to look at how to resolve it. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Madam Minister, here's what we're asking for. We think the employers should have the right to free speech. We think the employers should have the right to hear both sides of the issue. And we think employees should have the right to a secret ballot. In other words, the same rights people have during an election.

Madam Minister, why are you against basic democratic rights? People have the right to free speech and a secret ballot when they elect their government. Why do you take that right away from them in the workplace?

Madam Minister, will you support the Saskatchewan Party legislation to ensure free speech and a secret ballot in the workplace?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — I'll make a couple of comments, Mr. Speaker. One is that this is no different from the federal government's laws in this regard. So both ourselves and the federal government have had these laws for a long time. And I suspect if the members opposite were interested in understanding this rather than in creating further conflict, that it would be easier to get through a response to this question.

But I'll just say that workers do have the individual right to sign their card, and that's a private act when they sign that card. And we do believe that indicates the democratic intent of the worker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Clawback of Financial Support from Farmers

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier.

Mr. Premier, it looks like you and your NDP are up to your old tricks again. First it was the Finance minister's don't ask, don't tell strategy for the budget. Now it looks like the billion dollar agriculture package that you announced in February is phoney too.

According to AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) officials, most of the \$260 million in new support that you promised in February will be clawed back for any producer who qualifies for AIDA in the year 2000.

Mr. Premier, did you know on February 24, when you made your phoney announcement, that the one-time \$260 million AIDA payment would be clawed back? Why did you intentionally mislead thousands of desperate . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order, order. I'll just remind the hon. member, that's fairly strong language directed to another member. Kindly . . . Order, order, please. Order. Kindly direct your questions through the Chair.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Premier why he didn't inform the thousands of desperate farm families about the way the program worked.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the member opposite and to the Assembly, that there could be nothing further from the truth in the member's comment that anyone was misleading anyone.

There is no one — no one — no one, Mr. Speaker, would not understand that if you get a cheque for \$9,000, some taxpayers' payment through their government, that it wouldn't be counted as income. How could anything be more clear than if you get \$9,000 from other taxpayers, that it would be counted as income? Maybe you don't understand that, but most of us as farmers understand fully.

This is why when Grant Devine had special farm payments, when Mr. Devine went out and got money from the federal government along with other taxpayers' money, it was counted as income. And there is another thing that you may not understand but if farm income gets high enough, we'll actually have to pay income tax as well. Another secret that you might not be aware of.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — The side opposite, in case you have trouble hearing, the question is for the Premier. Mr. Premier, most people dismiss your so-called billion dollar announcement in February as more hot air as it was. But farm families believe that at least \$260 million was actually new financial assistance, and now they find out that you weren't telling the truth. Even your old pal Dick Proctor . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order. I would ask hon. members to kindly choose their words and their questions judiciously.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Premier, but you didn't explain the program fully. Even your old pal Dick Proctor, the NDP Member of Parliament for Regina, says that you misled the public. The National Farmers Union says it's cruel to announce assistance for farmers in dire need and then later tell them the money will be clawed back.

Mr. Premier, why did you mislead farm families into believing . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The hon. member's direct allegations are not acceptable, please.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the member opposite that her intent of accusing the government or the federal government of not telling farmers that the \$9,000 they get would not be income, speaks to that member opposite understanding of programs.

Now if they get enough through this program that they're not eligible for an aid program in another fund, why would anybody be surprised? Because the aid program is based on farm income. Now it doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that at a certain level you're not going to be eligible for an aid program.

And you know what? If we get really lucky — if we get really lucky and get a good crop this year and good prices — we

won't be eligible for any aid program. And wouldn't that be a wonderful position to be in?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Ms. Harpauer: — I have another question for the Premier. I would like to point out that I'm not alone in not understanding the program. A great deal of farmers out there obviously do not understand the program because it wasn't explained to them good enough. The NDP press release in February clearly states that there will be 260 million in new money for farm families.

Mr. Speaker, even the chairman of the House of Commons Agriculture Committee says that the NDP's secret clawback is a case of the government giving money with one hand and taking it away with another.

Why did you hold a press conference, Mr. Premier, in February to announce a program that does not exist? Why did you claim that there would be \$260 million new, one-time assistance for farmers when you knew that perhaps this was misleading?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I say again to the member opposite that there could be nothing more clear than how the program would work. And I say to the member opposite it . . . she was involved in the protest to Ottawa in getting the money. Obviously when the 260 million was announced everyone, everyone would understand that that is new income for farmers.

Now I say again that when it comes to the aid program — AIDA program — obviously the income that you receive under the new program will be counted as income. Everyone understands that. Just as if the price of wheat goes up — which I hope and pray it does — that will be counted as income and reduce even further the number of people who get the aid program.

What would be more wonderful for farmers not to have to get any aid from their friends and neighbours through their tax programs?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hermanson: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Premier to answer this question because it was the Premier who said there was a billion dollars — he said 260 million were new. That's not accurate because the reduction in the AIDA program will reduce that package down.

He's not coming clean with the people of Saskatchewan. He's not coming clean with the industry. Will he get up in his seat and explain why this package is smaller than he said it was?

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite, who seems to have a short memory of his own statements, that in the *World Spectator* on March 23, 1998 — *Moosomin World Spectator* — the member opposite who asked the question said, and I quote:

I don't believe in making any special deals for farmers (any special deals).

Now why would you expect when farmers get payments that that money would be treated any differently in their accounting than it would be in any other area?

The Speaker: — Order, order. Order. Order, please.

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to make it clear to the member opposite that when we announced the billion dollars — and I want to do this slowly so the member can write it down — we said that there would be 260 million in the special program, 40 million in our budget which our Minister of Finance announced in the budget, 400 million in interest free and 300 million for 1999 AIDA. And that 300 million will be there.

What they're talking about is AIDA for future years. There is a billion, and if the member wrote down the numbers, he will add it up and get 1 billion. But understanding his Tory background, adding numbers is not one of his strengths.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Commitments in the Throne Speech

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Finance. In his announcement this morning appointing Mr. Hartley Furtan to the A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy, the Finance minister indicated this fulfilled a commitment in the Throne Speech.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out some other commitments in the Throne Speech that haven't been met, such as the establishment of a provincial action committee on the rural economy; such as the farm input cost monitoring program; such as finding ways to reduce high input costs facing farm businesses; such as a long-term safety net program.

Mr. Speaker, why have you not followed through on the rest of your commitments to agriculture that you made in your Throne Speech?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully when the budget was read and I listened to members of the agriculture community outside of the Assembly after the budget was read.

With the changes to the tax on gasoline for farm use, with the changes of \$25 million on land tax where the education portion of land tax will be rebated to farmers, with the announcement of a new cover crop, a new forage crop for the year 2001, farmers, in general, with the billion dollar payment of interest free in payments that they will receive in the year 2000, are going to be able to get their crops seeded. And that was our main intent.

I understand the members opposite, especially the Leader of the Opposition who would not want to waste any taxpayers on subsidies, that we have come close to hitting that mark, and our projections are that there will be seeded in the province, about 32 to 33 million acres this year. The job has been accomplished with a great deal . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. Next question.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the commitments made in the Throne Speech were as shallow as the provincial budget itself. When the smoke cleared Saskatchewan people realized talk of tax cuts was just talk, and in reality this government is talking more of their own paycheque.

It's the same for our farm families. The promise of money by seeding time has come and gone. Many are already working the land, banking on the spring cash payment and hoping for an AIDA cheque down the road. But now they hear that this will be clawed back as well. Some of the promises made in the Throne Speech, specifically a long-term safety net program, would be very beneficial for the agricultural industry right now.

Mr. Minister, when can we expect to see some serious initiative from this government to meet the other promises that you made in your Throne Speech?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(1430)

Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter: — Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the member opposite that when it comes to our commitment to agriculture, I think nothing could be more clear.

We worked out a program — \$400 million with the federal government, interest free, for seeding the crop; \$260 million in direct payment; \$40 million in tax changes. And I say to the member opposite that when you talk about increases to agriculture, this province sees in this budget an increase of 17 per cent.

I want you to challenge . . . and challenge you to see what the Tories, your buddies in Nova Scotia, are doing with agriculture right now — right now. And I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition, who while he was in Ottawa, said . . . when the Liberals were cutting agriculture . . . that it wasn't enough. He brought in a motion in the Ag committee to cut agriculture further.

I say to the members opposite, this kind of hypocrisy will not go . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

TABLING OF REPORTS

The Speaker: — Before orders of the day, hon. members, I wish to table the *Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (Saskatchewan Branch) 31st Annual Report 1999*. I so table.

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, before orders of the day, I'd like to ask for leave to make an announcement of special interest to the Assembly.

Leave granted.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Appointee to A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier this afternoon, the Premier referred to the fulfillment of one of this government's Throne Speech commitments. That is the establishment of the A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy.

I'm pleased to rise today to formally announce the creation of the position and the appointment of its first occupant, Professor Hartley Furtan of the University of Saskatchewan, College of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, as the Premier mentioned, this new position has been established to improve the government's research capability by attracting recognized authorities in specific fields. As such, Professor Furtan will act as special adviser on agriculture to support the province at the next round of international trade talks.

For many years Saskatchewan has argued that international trade subsidies are one of the biggest challenges we have to overcome on the agricultural front. We must continue to be well prepared to defend our farmers' interests at international trade negotiations. Professor Furtan's expertise and experience will be a tremendous asset to Saskatchewan in this regard. He is a very worthy first occupant of this new position.

I'd like to note, Mr. Speaker, that family farming on the Prairies is more than just an abstract concept for Hartley Furtan. He was born and raised on a farm near Peebles, Saskatchewan. His academic training in agricultural economics will also allow him to contribute substantially to Saskatchewan's agricultural policy for the 21st century, and his four-year tenure as deputy minister of Agriculture and Food here in Saskatchewan gives him a solid understanding of the current policy framework within which we operate, particularly as it relates to the federal government. With the able advice and assistance of Professor Furtan, we will continue to impress upon the federal government the effects of protectionist international trade policies on our province.

Mr. Speaker, this new research Chair position is a long-term initiative that will ensure Saskatchewan remains the leader and innovator in developing effective public policy responses to issues that concern all Canadians.

The A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy will provide a vehicle for the Government of Saskatchewan to access the expertise of leading Canadian professionals in academia and business. Located in the Department of Finance, occupants of this Chair will join the government for fixed periods of time in order to address policy issues of particular importance to Saskatchewan. Appointments will be made by the deputy minister of Finance, in consultation with the deputy minister to the Premier.

The Speech from the Throne stated that the government would appoint an eminently qualified and respected special adviser on

agriculture to support our province at the next round of trade talks and to help the federal government confront the protectionist policies of our trading partners.

This research Chair will therefore be an integral part of the province's trade strategy in 2000 and 2001. In future years, the research Chair will be used to provide research and policy advice on other important issues facing the province. For example, issues of public debt, of global economy, public health, public education, and many other challenges and opportunities which will require a similar study if we are to improve our ability to respond to change.

Mr. Speaker, in the new economy, knowledge is the prime currency. That is why I am pleased to speak to this important initiative today which will help secure ability to attract the nation's top public policy advisers and to increase our knowledge wealth for the 21st century. And it's also why I'm pleased to formally name this prestigious position in honour of a most knowledgeable, distinguished, and accomplished civil servant, Dr. Albert Wesley Johnson.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With leave I would like to respond to the minister's statement if I could.

Leave granted.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too, on behalf of the official opposition, wish to congratulate Dr. Furtan on being the first appointment to this very prestigious Chair of public policy. As the minister has commented, Professor Furtan's background, his academic training, his expertise at the university, and especially as the deputy minister of Agriculture here in Saskatchewan, makes him a very worthy initial appointee.

To have someone of Dr. Furtan's ability focus on the current international trade distortions and the upcoming trade negotiations is certainly very timely. From the producers' perspective and from the perspective of Saskatchewan agriculture, there is no other issue that requires more urgent solutions. And, Dr. Furtan, if you wish input during your tenure, I would mention that this side of the House certainly has a lot of expertise in rural agriculture and, sir, we're available.

The government should be commended, Mr. Speaker, for its initiative on the establishment of such a public policy Chair, and by naming this Chair in honour of the career of Dr. A.W. Johnson. It is indeed recognizing the contributions of a true Saskatchewan and a true Canadian statesman.

And by implementing this A.W. Johnson Distinguished Chair in Public Policy as a long-term initiative, Saskatchewan should be able to address the many issues critical to this province by attracting distinguished and celebrated researchers.

So indeed, knowledge is the commodity of our future. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Axworthy that **Bill No. 28 — The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure for me to speak on Bill 28, The Ombudsman and Children's Advocate Amendment Act, 2000.

Mr. Speaker, it seems rather interesting that this particular piece of legislation is coming before the Assembly at this time.

What this Bill does is allow the Board of Internal Economy to set the salaries of both the Children's Advocate and the Provincial Ombudsman. This will be determined by the Board of Internal Economy.

Another amendment is that the Lieutenant Governor in Council has the authority to suspend the Children's Advocate or the Ombudsman while the legislature is not in session on the grounds of incapacity to act, neglect of duty, misconduct, etc.

One of the other amendments includes that both of these offices will be required to file separate annual reports illustrating that they are truly independent bodies.

Mr. Speaker, there are some good things happening here that will allow the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman to have access to whatever information they require in order to conduct an appropriate investigation into any of the complaints that they receive.

One other provision will allow for the Ombudsman to waive the written requirement of complaints. There is some concerns with this that the Ombudsman's office is currently so overwhelmed with cases that something may get lost in the shuffle.

There are some concerns that have been raised regarding the Board of Internal Economy setting the salaries for these two offices — which my colleague from Cannington has already raised — such as why is it now necessary to change and who is setting the salary for the Children's Advocate and the Ombudsman?

The minister stated in his second reading speech that these two offices are completely independent of the government. And if this is the case, why do they want to allow a legislative committee to set their salaries?

I stated earlier that I find it rather interesting that these amendments are coming at this time since the release of an absolutely scathing report from the Children's Advocate on foster care in our province.

I commend the Children's Advocate for showing the people of our province just how much confusion there is with this Department of Social Services, especially when it comes to foster care.

And, Mr. Speaker, if I may, I'd like to go to that report of the Children's Advocate just released, and just leave you with some quotes. And some of them are just absolutely ironic and just totally unbelievable. The one that really struck me was this one, and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

We had a (child) in our care for two months and hadn't received payment. When we called to ask about payment, the worker was relieved to know we had the baby, because they didn't know where he was. The file had only a birth certificate in it — no other information.

That is absolutely appalling and it should never happen in a province that is supposed to be civilized, Mr. Speaker.

Some other quotes I'd like to leave this Assembly with, Mr. Speaker, on page 3 a Department of Social Services worker says, and I quote:

Until this province decides that children are important, there will be no real change.

Page 15, a foster parent says, and I quote:

Since the Quill report, there has been a real emphasis on standards and making the paperwork prioritized, but there is no improvement in working with kids.

Page 19, a quote from a youth formerly in care:

The worst thing about being in care for me was that a whole bunch of people who really didn't know me were making decisions about me that would affect me for the rest of my life.

Page 30, a foster parent says:

The kids from my home haven't seen their worker in ten months.

And on page 37 a physician says:

A six year old boy was going into care for the third time in 18 months. He wistfully asked if he "could stay longer this time" because every time he went home "someone hurts me."

(1445)

Another few things, Mr. Speaker, that this report says is that children would like information that they can keep that documents their life such as pictures, report cards, and personal items, and their life's books are sometimes empty or non-existent for children in care. And they want a record kept of the good times. And unfortunately for a lot of these kids, their good times are few and far between.

And as I said with the baby that was lost there, there is a lack of

documentation on file; visits are not documented, nothing is documented. And in this one case, the only thing in the file was a birth certificate.

Here's what some of the other people have said, and these are quotes, Mr. Speaker.

I had this worker who I didn't think liked me, so when I got a new one, I was worried that she would read my file and not like me too.

Sometimes when you get a new worker, they forget that your file is not really you; it's just what you've done bad and what your other worker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. I'd like the hon. member to relate back to the legislation that's being debated at hand.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know that there are a lot of . . . is a lot of work to be done in the . . . with the Children's Advocate through the Department of Social Services and stuff, and I can just go by what has happened in my own constituency.

And I honestly believe that the special needs of some of these children need to be, need to be addressed whether it's . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . This relates to Social Services, the Children's Advocate. And maybe that's why there isn't much being done about it, because they don't know what it relates to, Mr. Speaker.

The special needs — whether they are fetal alcohol syndrome, mentally or physically challenged, or Social Services ethnic background. And I know just by the concerns brought forth by the people in my constituency of Estevan that the caseworkers are extremely busy, and when this happens cases of people allegedly abusing the systems, etc., aren't looked into as quickly as they should be and this may lead to very costly situations, both economically and socially.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that a lot of people do realize that there are problems in the Social Services department. And with that being said, I can only imagine what is happening in other departments . . .

An Hon. Member: — That's right. That's why this government's putting forward this legislation.

Ms. Eagles: — Yes, that's right.

Since these amendments will allow the Lieutenant Governor in Council to suspend the Children's Advocate or Provincial Ombudsman when this Assembly is not in session, who will be determining whether or not they should be suspended, Mr. Speaker, and what will they base their decisions on? And who will be enforcing this?

There are some serious concerns here which we can . . . which can be addressed in committee. And with that, Mr. Speaker, at this time, I would move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 24

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 24 — The Department of Agriculture Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Peters: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to talk . . . discuss what I see in this Bill or what I don't see in this Bill.

I have . . . when the deputy minister or the Deputy Premier suggested that they were going to make amendments to this agricultural Act and they talked about doing financial assistance . . . in the financial assistant part of it, farmers get really, really nervous when they hear this, the opposite, the people opposite talk about financial discussion in the farm field.

It's a sad state of affairs because they don't believe this government is about to do anything. And if they do, it will hurt them; it'll hurt the farmers.

Mr. Speaker, producers have every right to be nervous whenever government starts thinking about making changes to agriculture. They have to wonder if this is going to be another thing forced down their throats without consultation. Just like the members opposite were doing with forced amalgamation.

And I keep wondering, when we talk about forced amalgamation, what time and energies were spent doing that. Monies that were lost and cost the RMs (rural municipality). The Saskatchewan Party is proud to be part of that group that has shown leadership in regards to amalgamation.

Mr. Speaker, the members opposite think of themselves . . . think to themselves, why don't the farmers trust us? All they have to think about is they cancelled the GRIP (gross revenue insurance program) in 1992, took all their money, and haven't replaced it with a single long-term farm aid package.

We came up with . . . or they came up with the federal-provincial AIDA program that nobody fits into. We have a crop insurance policy, program in the province that . . . it's interesting because in my constituency, the very west side against the Alberta border has had drought for three and four years, and neither AIDA fits that program because 70 per cent of nothing is still nothing; the crop insurance program doesn't fit there either.

It's interesting that farmers get caught in acts of God. That's their fault that acts of God . . . their premiums go up, their coverage goes down with crop insurance. It's interesting that an act of God, which these farmers have no control over, affects their bottom line.

I can understand if the premiums go up and coverage goes down when they have bad farming practices, but when they do this kind of thing with acts of God, it doesn't make sense at all.

I attended a number . . . in 1998, I attended an agricultural meeting in Neilburg, a drought assistant type of meeting, where the hon. minister of Agriculture at that time, the member from Watrous, attended. His line was that anything that had to do with agriculture was a federal jurisdiction and they really had

nothing . . . and they didn't have any money for us. And there was hundreds of people there and they did not take lightly to what he said.

And this AIDA program that they have come across with now and the one that we were arguing about in question period, where nobody knows for sure if there is any money and if there is, who's going to get it. They did hand over some farm aid program, a small bit to a few farmers early on in November and September.

Mr. Speaker, all they did was call an election in the middle of harvest — and we all know what happened there — and then forced the amalgamation issue. And they then wonder why we don't trust them.

The Bill also mentions the opportunity to provide funding for development of new food products and technology. Mr. Speaker, this is a good thing. But in the hands of the members opposite, my colleagues and I have to think about what hidden agenda there is.

Because this government may talk about research and development, but in fact it is their policy that is driving our brightest minds out of Saskatchewan. This government likes to brag about what they do for farmers and post-secondary education. So why do they leave our country? It's because this government is destroying Saskatchewan with their high taxes and unfriendly business climate.

Because of that, people leave. They leave cities. They leave towns. And they leave farms. And I personally have had a son leave our farm. He farmed with us for 15 years, and now has left the farm and is working elsewhere.

I would also like to, Mr. Speaker, I would like to also mention that in this legislation dealing . . . the minister talks about dealing with a piece of legislation. And I quote from a small section:

the minister may, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan:

(a) acquire, by purchase or otherwise, personal property, including securities;

I have no problem with the word purchase. But I do have a problem with the word otherwise.

What does otherwise mean? Does it mean they can come to my farm and take my tractor? Does it mean they can take my land? I mean they talk about taking securities — what are securities?

And they did take away my GRIP program — my contract. I'm sure just this particular clause leaves concern and need for further study.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot more study required on this Bill. So with that, I move adjournment of debate on this Bill. Thank you.

Debate Adjourned.

Bill No. 1

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 1 — The Farm Financial Stability Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address this Bill a little bit today if I may.

This is an Act that deals with farm financial stability. Everywhere I go, and the people I talk to, when you mention this government and its practices with dealing with agriculture, people roll their eyes and they know that the members opposite, what they have done to the farming industry in this province. So far, they've built a coffin and now are driving in the nails.

The most recent example of this, Mr. Speaker, is the whole debate surrounding forced amalgamation. There is no doubt whatsoever that this government follows through with its plan of top to bottom restructuring that will signal the end of life in the rural areas. So when you talk about farm financial stability with the members opposite, maybe the term should be farm financial instability.

But as the people of Saskatchewan know, Mr. Speaker, people know which side of the House shows true leadership in all instances — this side of the House, the Saskatchewan Party. Many farmers came to the NDP government when the farm crisis started. But what happened? The door was slammed in their face. Farmers held rallies, staged protests. But what did the members opposite do? Nothing — nothing at all.

Saskatchewan Party stepped up to the plate. We picked up the ball that the NDP fumbled away. Saskatchewan Party suggested many things — an all party meeting, and a trip to Ottawa, assistance programs. Still this NDP government did not listen. They were too busy finding how to expand the PST and drive people out of the province.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, finally the government admitted — yes, yes, the NDP admitted to the farmers of this province — their failure to deal with agriculture. They admitted to nine years of turning a blind eye to Saskatchewan agriculture. And what did it get us? AIDA — whoops. So when you mention the farm financial stability, this government has a terrible record. I mentioned it earlier — farm financial instability is what we should be talking about.

Then the members opposite decided the . . . then the members opposite decided, the hon. Premier decided, well let's get rid of these farmers; let's call an election in the middle of harvest. That will fix them. Well September 16 rolled around, and for the members opposite let's review what happened.

Eric Upshall, gone. Judy Bradley, gone. Bye-bye, Bernie Wiens. So long, Andrew Renaud. Farewell, Larry Ward. The list goes on, Mr. Speaker. There was a huge farm vote turnout — 60 per cent of the people voted against this administration. So that's a message that was sent on the farm financial instability.

(1500)

Something else I would like to deal with, the farm financial instability, something that just came out in the paper today, Mr. Speaker. When farmers, unlike the members opposite, or people that are on a wage where they can budget for year round because they know exactly at the end of the month what's going to be coming in, what's going to be going out — they can budget for the car payments, their house payments, insurance payments, their pet food. The only adjustment they might have had to make this year is when the PST was put on pet food so next month they would have to have adjusted that a little bit.

But farmers . . . from month to month these can change. I'll just read this today out of the paper which is going to probably change some farmers that were maybe counting a little extra money are going to have to be doing with a little less.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'll just read something out of *The Leader-Post*.

Saskatchewan farmers who receive a payment out of the \$260 million farm-aid package announced in February will qualify for less money under the 2000 income disaster program.

So that means when they . . . so their financial stability is going to be dropping now a little bit. They're going to have a little bit planning; it's going to be a little harder.

According to federal and provincial agriculture officials, farmers who receive a cheque this spring will have to count it as income if they apply for the income assistance program — which could reduce the size of their overall payment.

(Well) That's not . . . (sitting so) well with farmers who were led to believe it was additional money, said Darrin Qualman of the National Farmers Union.

"For the farmers who need this money it's cruel to announce money then tell them that one program cancels out the other . . .

"They end up clawing it back from the farmers that need it most," he said.

"That's an odd way to pay out money that's supposed to benefit farm families."

Farmers are expected to receive on average between \$4,000 and \$5,000 under the Canadian-Saskatchewan Adjustment Program (CSAP) next month.

When the money was announced in Ottawa by Prime Minister Jean Chretien, Saskatchewan Premier . . . and Manitoba Premier . . . it was billed as additional money for farmers in the two provinces hit hardest by the farm income crisis.

Ottawa put in \$240 million, with the provinces topping up the program to a total of \$400 million. Saskatchewan . . . (supposedly was to) receive \$300 million and Manitoba \$100 million.

. . . deputy agriculture critic for the Saskatchewan Party and a Watrous-area farmer, said the province had a responsibility to outline all of the details of the program to farmers, since it is administering the program.

"It's looking more and more like a shell game," she said.

Hal Cushon, a provincial agriculture department official, admitted the fact the extra money may hurt future pay-outs wasn't widely known among farmers, but can't be avoided because of the way the Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance (AIDA) program was originally structured.

"Is it fair or not? It's the way the programs are designed because . . . (It's the way the programs are designed because they are followed a special way) that AIDA has to follow," he said.

If the one-time payment was excluded, Cushon said the U.S. could use that as an excuse to launch trade actions against Canada such as limiting grain imports.

"There will be people who argue whether that results in the most useful program for farmers, but it certainly doesn't raise any questions about whether it's acceptable under trade rules," . . .

A spokesman for (the federal government) said any effect on farmer's 2000 payments would be minimal.

But I don't know what he calls minimal. For some of them it might be a third, it might be a quarter. I don't know — maybe he calls that minimal. I'm not sure. But I can go on more of that article if you want but if not . . .

But the people of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in fact all the province sent this government a clear message September 16. That the election the Premier called in the middle of harvest to keep farmers away from voting in while the farm population, Mr. Deputy Speaker, they came out in droves to vote against this government and everything it stands for and how it has failed in helping producers. Almost every rural MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) gone, and you know what's going to happen in the next election, which probably isn't too far away judging how things have been since the coalition was formed.

But that just goes to show you how the people of this province are viewing anything that's coming from the government side on the financial stability. If they're going to bring it, we need programs, we need long-range programs. We see no commitment from the side on the government. There were questions today raised again from their budget if they're going to follow through with these programs, how are they going to follow through?

The people out there want to know how they can budget with their crops. I mean you can have a bin of canola right now worth \$6,000; a month from now it can be worth \$4,500. You've lost \$1,500. You may budget that \$1,500 towards fuel expense. All of a sudden it's gone. So now you've got to look somewhere else, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that money. It makes it very hard.

And I hope this Act will deal with this. But so far looking through it, I know that it's . . . I hope it addresses the problem. But I know it needs a lot more work, and I think with some input from our side maybe we can make this a good Bill. But I would like to quote a . . . make some other talk about it before I adjourn the debate.

We know we need some long . . . we need something long-term that we can bank on; that the farmers can go to the bank, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a little bit like GRIP. I'm not saying it has to be GRIP, but that gave us some sort of stability, some financial stability, and right now we haven't seen anything come forth.

I just hope that the Minister of Agriculture is working on it, but unfortunately hope is not a real common word used these days in the agriculture sector, Mr. Deputy Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Well I hope he is. I don't think he's working hard enough and we're going to make sure that he keeps on this.

There doesn't seem to be a lot of hope in the agriculture sector although we all hope that he's working on some sort of a long-term safety net that can get us through the real valleys. The peaks are easy to manage because we can do certain things on the farm that allow us to manage.

But when you go through a valley like we've hit, and we've hit a long, hard valley, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it's an extended valley that we've hit, and we've seen absolutely nothing coming out of the federal government or provincial government, perhaps this provincial government figures that crop insurance that we've got, Mr. Speaker, that you know an awful lot about, but the crop insurance program we have isn't quite sufficient, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The farmers need more — more programs. We need long term, something that will help us.

On my farm, myself, I do take crop insurance but it's only because it's an absolute must, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I think I should. It certainly isn't because of the benefits that's going to help me out through the real valleys that we see in agriculture.

But when the members hollered all we talk about bad prices, well they are bad and they have been bad and they're going to stay . . . unfortunately, I think they are going to be bad. That's why we need to be looking at this. This government over there needs to be looking at programs so that they can . . . so they can get through, so everything can be on a level playing field for farmers.

A lot of members opposite don't know what it's like, basically going day by day, not knowing what you . . . don't know what, don't know what it's like when you never know from day to day how your income's going to vary. How it's . . . the world prices, how all their . . . when the weather affects stuff, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean you can have a good crop coming, you can plan for something, and all of a sudden weather will destroy it. And then things are tough, then you're back to budgeting, Mr. Speaker.

And then we talk about the cattle industry, all the other industries that need to be stable to make a strong provincial agriculture province, which this is. It depends a lot on

agriculture, this province, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It needs a strong agriculture sector. It needs a government that is willing, committed to be always addressing the problems that are coming up, that are facing this province at any given day, and working all the time and working hard at it. Which I don't think this government has worked as hard as they could be on that, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And I hope they will keep working hard on it. And we will keep . . . this side of the House will always keep pushing them towards making sure that farmers have financial stability. Which members . . . if you're working for a wage, you have that. Like say you have that, you have that right, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how you can plan for years ahead on your children's college education, put money aside. Like say for car payments, your grocery payments, anything like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And when you're in the agriculture sector, they really don't have that.

On looking over this Bill . . . And I'd like to read just a little bit about it for the members opposite just so they know that, if some of them have looked at it, some of the things they are amending.

Well section 50 is to be amended:

Subsection 50(3) is amended:

(a) in subclause (a)(i) by adding “for the same commodity” after “loan”; and

(b) subclause (b)(i) by adding “for that some commodity” after “loan”.

Section 52 is to be amended.

The following subsection is added after subsection 52(5):

“(6) No producer who has entered into a producer agreement with a producer association shall sell a commodity belonging to the producer association other than in the name of the producer association”.

Section 54:

7(1) Subsection 54(3) is amended by striking out “carrying out his or her duties as a provincial supervisor” and substituting “inspecting or removing a commodity with respect to which a producer association has obtained a guaranteed loan, or for any other purpose related to the duties of the provincial supervisor pursuant to this Act or the regulations”.

(2) Subsection 54(4) is amended by striking out “the place or premises mentioned in subsection (1)” and substituting “and search the place or premises mentioned in subsection (1) for the purpose of inspecting or removing a commodity with respect to which a producer association has obtained a guaranteed loan, or for any other purpose related to the duties of the provincial supervisor pursuant to this Act or regulations”.

Now this clause, I don't really understand it. I've tried to get a hold of the minister, but they haven't got back to me yet about this. Does that mean that they can come at any time without your permission and inspect your grain, your cattle, or any commodity you have on there? Or can they just take it if they feel you haven't complied with the rules? Is there appeal process we don't know?

There's lots of good questions about this that need to be answered, that need to be carried on, that need to be checked out on that. A lot of producers are a little worried about this. Does that mean they can come on your property without your permission if you do get a loan through the government? What rights does a producer have to protect himself in case of bankruptcy?

And also the government side. Are they going to hire inspectors to check out on these loans? What kind of credit, or what kind of applications are you going to be filling out to get these loans? And what will you be putting down as security? Will it be land or equipment, or . . . That's a lot of the questions that producers have asked me on this subsection, and I don't know if the members opposite have a lot of the answers on it.

And I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that before they vote on this Bill, they should read it. Like one member says here, read it, look at it, examine it, debate it.

There's another section, 57, that is amended:

“. . . **by adding** “or any other person” **after** “. . . (mentioned) producers”.

So does that mean by adding “any other person” after producers, does that mean, does that include your family members? Does that mean that any business partners, if you're combined with anybody, does that mean that they can maybe put a lien against all your property, everything, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

Another section:

The following section is added after section 60:

“Provincial supervisor may act where guarantee unduly at risk

60.1(1) Where a producer association that has received a guaranteed loan is inactive, and where, in the opinion of the provincial supervisor, the guarantee on the guaranteed loan is unduly at risk, the provincial supervisor may exercise any or all of the following powers or function of the producer association:

- (a) marketing the commodities;
- (b) confirming inventory;
- (c) removing or selling commodities pursuant to a producer agreement;
- (d) recovering commodities from third parties;
- (e) doing any other act or thing necessary, incidental

or conducive to exercising the powers and functions mentioned in clauses (a) to (d).

(2) For the purpose of exercising any power or function mentioned in subsection (1), the provincial supervisor may apply to a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench for any order mentioned in subsection (3).

(3) On hearing an application pursuant to (the) subsection (2), the judge may make any order that he or she considers appropriate, including:

(a) an order prohibiting a person in possession of a commodity from selling or otherwise disposing of that commodity;

(b) an order directing the sale of a commodity and the payment of the proceeds from the sale of that commodity into court, pending the issuance of an order pursuant to clause (c);

(c) an order determining the entitlement to a commodity or to the proceeds from the sale of the commodity”.

(1515)

Getting back to the provincial supervisor, is that going to be an appointee job? It doesn't say if it's going to be tendered out or if they even have one already; what his role is going to be, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in filling out. What is his powers? Will he have the same powers as a judge, Mr. Deputy Speaker?

These are a lot of the questions that producers ask me when they look at these Bills, because they wonder the power, because most people worry about government coming in unduly and being unfair to people and taking property away from them, being . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, taking over their lives, and arrogant, and just a number of other things that people are worried about in government, especially when it comes to farmers. They're an independent people; cattle producers are very independent.

They get very worried when they go to loans for government that they're giving up a lot of their rights that you don't give up under when you get a bank loan. It seems like when you go to the government for loans, it seems like they want basically your whole farm as security. And maybe even your kids' future and maybe even to sign away your life almost — I've heard a lot of producers tell me on that end of it.

Getting back to the Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker, which what we're talking about today, Section 61 is amended also in this Bill.

(a) by adding the following clause after clause (a):

“(a.01) governing producer agreements between two or more member producers and the producer association”;

(b) by adding the following clause after clause (j):

“(j.1) prescribing pursuant to section 53 the method of replacing or identifying commodities that are . . . subject

of a producer agreement”;

(c) by adding the following clauses after clause (n):

“(n.1) authorizing producer associations to deduct any amount owing to the association by a producer or any (other) expenses incurred by the association with respect to the producer from:

- (i) the proceeds of sale of a commodity; or
- (ii) a refund of the producer’s contributions to the assurance fund;

I know that maybe some members, Mr. Deputy Speaker, don’t like me reading these Bills, but these are what we’re supposed to be debating. And maybe some of the members opposite don’t have them. There’s also producers right now that are watching TV that hear this reading these clauses.

I know when I speak, many of my constituents like to tune in the TV. And so this way, when I’m reading the Bill and the clauses that are altered, they can contact my office or contact here. That is the idea, isn’t it, for us to be open — an open, accountable government like that government has said lots that we should be. And that we are for sure on this side of the House, but we like to be open and accessible to people.

So I like the people, my constituents when a Bill . . . and this doesn’t affect . . . because I come from a rural constituency, it does affect them. And I like to take the liberty of reading a Bill a lot of times for the people that are, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that are watching the TV.

And I believe that they deserve that right. That is a fundamental right of . . . that’s why we’re here — to inform the people of what’s coming up, what the changes are, so then they can contact us. And I hope the members opposite, when they do Bills, I hope they contact their constituents, to visit them, to see how it affects their lives. Because you have to remember that we’re here just . . . we’re just here as representatives, we’re just here as representatives of the people. And so we want to inform the people of what’s going on.

But getting back to the Bill, getting back to this farm financial stability Bill, Mr. Speaker. The people out there are leery because, I mean, of the GRIP contract. We can go back to that. They thought that was something. They thought that was brought in . . . they thought that was going to be a long-term, forever and ever thing, something that was supposed to give them financial stability. That they thought that was in there basically written in stone. What happened? It got tore up.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that’s why a lot of people are nervous about that. Like say the GRIP was that was supposed to give them some financial . . . and a lot of people said that it even might have been flawed a little bit; it was a good program. It was something that was a carry-on from year to year to year to year. Something that you could plan — plan on. That you knew that a certain level, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of income was going to be coming in.

Another one is the program for the early ’70s — wheat

stabilization, the western grain stabilization plan. That was another plan that was brought in, was in for a number of years, where producers paid in a little bit off every wheat cheque — 3 per cent, I believe, that was paid in every year. And then through the lean years, they could take it out. And that program was taken away from them.

And I think we need programs on that. When you talk about The Farm Financial Stability Act, we need programs like that because that is what farm financial stability Acts should be dealing with, is long-range programs that give the farm families stability. Because that’s all they want out there. It’s the same as any other person that goes to work every day, knowing at the end of the day what they’ve earned; what they’ve worked that day. When a person goes for eight hours of work, he knows at the end of the day what his take-home pay is — how much money he’s going to make. For a farmer, a lot of these at the end of the day do not know that. And it makes it very hard to . . .

But to us on this side, this is a very serious Bill because it deals with all my constituents out there. The majority of my constituents are in the agriculture sector and when you talk to them, all they talk about is: how prices are low; the future — am I going to be farming next year; will there be land for my sons to farm; I farmed this from my dad all my life — am I going to be able to carry on farming? That worries them a lot. And I think it’s something this government has to address and I don’t know if this Bill really addresses all of that. I think it needs some more things.

But, Mr. Speaker, there’s still a lot of studies still needed on this Bill and a lot of input which we’re willing to help the government on that side to work that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have a lot of good ideas on this side, Mr. Deputy Speaker. All we need is the government on the other side to listen to them.

But, Mr. Speaker, there’s still a lot of study, like I said before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, needed on this Bill. But as you can tell by things I’ve talked about, I would like to adjourn debate on this Bill, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 2

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Lingenfelter that **Bill No. 2 — The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999** be now read a second time.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I would like to . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to speak on Bill No. 2, The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999. And there are a number of concerns I would like to bring forward today starting with the letter to the editor in *The Western Producer* from March 2 issue. And I’ll read parts of this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

This cattle ID system was brought in with very little notice to producers. I learned of it in January, and other producers

I've talked to know little, if anything, about it. Must I join every association to cast a vote not to "fix what ain't broke." Leave the cattle industry alone.

A tag for \$1, come on, look how much (the) affordable gun registry is over budget. It won't be long until we (will) . . . need a "cow acquisition permit" to deal . . . cattle. Maybe even a cow safety test will be taken before one gets a license. Will we need a license, or a permit book, because quota's are coming. How can more rules, regulations, and fees heaped on cow/calf producers be vital to the future of the cattle industry?

And it goes on, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

. . . An article in the February 2nd issue of the *The StarPhoenix* said a cow was found with Tuberculosis when slaughtered. That means it was tracked down with the resources we have now. But hang on, what if that cow was bought and sold a dozen times and lost its tag half of those times? The new owners would just retag it so it would be sold again and the original owner would be lost in the shuffle of tags. But even worse, what if the cow kept its original tag and somewhere between owners #2 and #12 it was abused or picked up a disease?

And in the letter to the editor, it goes on. But that basically is the concern of one producer.

I'd also like quote from an article in *The Western Producer* April 6, 2000, on a plan to introduce cattle ID (identification):

Cost is one reason. While each tag (of the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency program) costs \$1, it adds up to . . . and \$5.76 million for Canadian beef producers.

"That's a lot of money taken out of producers' pockets," . . .

So there's some concern there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many livestock producers have concerns with the direction the government is taking in regards to Bill No. 2 and have serious questions about animal identification and what we're seeing is the possibility of ear tags. The unfortunate part of that is anyone who has been involved in the livestock industry through the past years knows we still haven't come up with a good sound program. We're wondering about a system that has tags that do not get lost. There are a lot of issues with the producers regarding this, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to mention the worry some farmers have about this government that are indeed justified when you hear about how this NDP administration has almost destroyed rural Saskatchewan. We worry about how this program could potentially give with one hand and take with the other. That's something the members opposite have gotten done to a science over the past nine years . . . gotten down to a science, Mr. Deputy Speaker, especially with news worrying about the recent farm aid program.

An Ag Canada official says farmers who get money this spring from one-time payment will receive less from the income disaster program in 2000. That's very disheartening to hear.

Now I know many of the members opposite don't know much about farming and agriculture. But one thing they do understand is less money — less money for farmers. The members opposite brag about how they help rural people when in fact they are out to get rid of the family farm.

Here's a quote on this most recent development:

Clearly this is an example of federal and provincial governments leading farmers to think they were getting more help than they are. The premiers and the Prime Minister were not really up front about this.

And do you know who said this? Dick Proctor, one of the federal cousins to the members opposite.

Mr. Speaker, how should the farmers trust this government when their own people say such things?

I'd like to go on, Mr. Speaker, concerning The Animal Identification Amendment Act, 1999. And it's generally accepted by many producers that the government has been pushing way too fast. They've set up deadlines, the producers are facing deadlines. And they are not informed well of what the whole program is all about. And they are unaware of what the costs are going to be. And, Mr. Speaker, the producers of this province just need more time to adjust, to learn what is expected of them, and to help make changes to this Act.

Of course cost is always a concern in any industry and it's no different in the livestock industry. It's just not the price of the tag that's involved here. When cattle producers buy cattle or bring cattle in from the range, they generally run them into a chute and give them their shots and brands and vaccinations, implants and tags at that time. Now this process is very stressful on the animals, and producers try to do as little of this as possible but still get the proper health precautions made with the vaccinations and so on.

Now with this system of tagging, the way I understand it, when it is enacted, feedlots in this province will have to purchase tags and run the cattle through the chute in order to tag them to be within the rules of this program. And that's an extra stress on the animals — loss of weight gain, and potential loss of life in some cases. The little that you do with these animals, the better.

(1530)

And I understand that after that, the producers at the farm level will have to tag their animals before they can take it to market. And again that's extra stress on the animals. And even the day before they move their animals to a feedlot or to a market, they will have to run these animals through and make sure that they have these tags on.

Now in the past, Mr. Deputy Speaker, branding has been basically the only legal identification that livestock have on them. And I think it's generally accepted that it's not as humane as possible, but that's the only way of legally identifying ownership in this province at this time. Not only it's a legal problem, but it's generally accepted that packing plants wish animals were not branded because the brand scars the hide and they lose value when they're trying to sell the hides to their

suppliers.

Now tagging is a better way but it's not foolproof like a brand. Of course there's also tattooing that could be done, but that's a very cumbersome way of identifying animals and it just would not be very efficient at all in dealing with cattle in large numbers. Hopefully with technology, electronic ID will be made more animal- and producer-friendly. And we hope in the future that that's the way that animals can be identified.

But we have to always take into all the factors, we have to take into consideration the consumer, not only the consumer in the province of Saskatchewan but also in the country and with our trading partners around the world. And there are some of our trading customers that are uneasy about health considerations in livestock, and the consumers in our country and around the world must be informed and be made to feel comfortable with our products coming out of cattle . . . coming out of Canada.

And as in every case, the customer's always right and we must protect our export markets. Now I've been in the cattle industry all of my life, and at the end of the day it's what the customer wants and needs. And if that's what our trading customers and our consumers in this country want — is a better way of identifying our livestock — then we must go in that direction.

And I also believe it's a very practical way of identifying animals and protecting our animals and our industry from health problems. There's many diseases around the world. Hoof and mouth disease is one of the obvious ones that come up. But there are others that are . . . that possibly can enter our herds. Tuberculosis is one of them. And we must have a way of tracking where these animals come from if these animals show up with any of these diseases.

And I believe that some form of tagging system must be brought into place — or identification, really more than a tagging issue.

The Canadian Cattlemen's Association is in favour of a national-wide ID program. Saskatchewan cattle feeders are also in favour of this. And recently talking to the Saskatchewan cattle feeders, they have told me that the Canadian Cattlemen's Association and the cattle feeders association, are . . . will come out and do information meetings and talk to the public and talk to the livestock producers concerning this issue, and with the intent of informing everyone about how the program could work or should work and make it more palatable to everybody concerned.

And I believe education is always the way to go. And right now the producers of this province, and country I might add, are not comfortable with this process, and I believe there must be a much better way of informing our producers and our citizens of this country concerning this issue.

And before we go and start setting deadlines and enforcing new rules and regulations, I believe that we must do a much better job of doing this education process and allow our associations to do this. They are very good at it and they know the right people to talk to and go from there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we would like to review this Bill

somewhat more carefully and make sure all farmers' concerns are looked after. And at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 18

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion of the Hon. Mr. Cline that **Bill No. 18 — The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2000**, be now read a second time.

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a privilege . . . or I take this opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to review the amendment to The Public Employees Pension Plan Act.

There's a number of . . . From first looking at the Bill, it seems fairly straightforward; there seems to be some fairly routine amendments. But then when you look at it a little bit more closely, I think there are some things here that we have to be somewhat careful with, particularly with the record that this government has in dealing with the pension plans for government employees. And I'll be expanding on that somewhat later in my discussion of this Bill.

I listened with interest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the Minister of Finance introduced the Bill. I found it very interesting to hear that there was approximately 35,000 people that are presently under the pension plan. And this plan has assets of over \$2 billion which is, you know, quite a large sum of money. And I think it's very important, when we amend a plan such as this, that we be very careful as to what the amendments are, what they entail, how they affect people, and those sorts of things.

Also I certainly didn't realize that there was 98 participating employers that contributed to the plan, and therefore any amendments would have fairly wide-ranging effects on quite a number of agencies and departments within government.

Briefly, to summarize the changes as I see them; I see a number of things that this Bill does. It speaks to the voluntary funds that employees can put into the pension plan, and it deals with some of the provisions upon retirement or an employee moving on to another line of employment and perhaps wanting to withdraw the voluntary contributions. It talks about lowering the retirement age and also mentions things about . . . or improves the capability of employees to transfer pension funds from one pension plan to another.

And as I said on the onset of my speech, that I think these aspects, if taken at face value, seem to be improvements to the plan. But, as in anything, I think there are some concerns that we have to look at.

It mentions about remittance of premiums, premiums to the plan, on a shortened time frame. I guess I'd have to wonder how this would affect employers. I believe the minister mentioned . . . or it's mentioned in the explanatory notes that many of the employers are already on the shortened time frame for remitting premiums. I would like to see evidence of that; talk to some of the people directly affected to see if that perhaps is a hardship, if that would act to the cost of doing business and

which ultimately gets passed onto the taxpayer.

The minister talked about flexibility in the plan, particularly with regards to the voluntary funds, the contributions that an employee makes to the plan. And he mentioned in his introduction remarks that monies that were voluntarily contributed to the pension plan can be . . . after July 1, 2001 will be able to be taken out of the pension plan and put into registered retirement savings bonds and a locked-in retirement account or a life income account or a locked-in retirement income fund. It seems to me that these provisions provide a certain amount of flexibility but I'm wondering if they could . . . if the options that an employee has to transfer those funds, if they wish to do so, whether there could be more flexibility.

I'm not sure what Revenue Canada's rulings in this matter are, and I think that area should be looked into; and I would hope that the minister would explore all possibilities in those areas. Many people nowadays have self-directed RRSPs (registered retirement savings plans) where they make the decisions as to what type of investments or what type of securities that they wish to invest their money in and those sorts of things. And it just seems to me that some of these provisions under voluntarily withdrawals are somewhat restrictive, and I would urge the minister to explore all the opportunities.

One of the provisions of this amendment is to reduce the retirement age from the present 55 to age 50. I look at this with somewhat of mixed feelings. I realize that in today's society people often have one or more, two or three careers in their lifetime and so on, and that perhaps by reducing the retirement age to 50 from 55 offers employees more flexibility and that sort of thing.

But it seems to me that there's a cost associated with it, and not only a cost to the pension plan — and which may or may not be a fact because of the lower pension entitlements if you retired at an earlier age — but it seems to me there's a greater cost to society when we're putting people who have a lot of ability and capabilities and a lot of years to contribute, putting them out to pasture such . . . in retirement. And I think we have to look at that whole issue, and see if that actually is the right way to go.

As I mentioned, the minister spoke a lot about flexibility of the plan and making things a lot more . . . a lot easier for people entering the pension plan and exiting the pension plan and those sorts of things. But any time this government deals with people's pensions, they like to present themselves as friends of labour, friends of government employees.

And yet very recently I had a number of constituents come forward with an issue that they're dealing with over pension . . . with this very issue of pension, and that has to do with some amendments that were made to the pension plan back in 1981. Apparently at that time under the Blakeney government, there was some amendments made to allow people who worked on a part-time basis for various agencies of government, departments of government, to allow them to join the plan and buy back service for previous years and that sort of thing.

And according to the people that talked to me, and I did talk to representatives of SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union), the government of the day —

which was the Allan Blakeney government of that time — didn't do a very good job of informing their employees that they were now eligible for some of these pension benefits. And so either they didn't tell them or they gave them the wrong information.

But the net effect of the whole thing was, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was that these employees didn't participate in the pension plan. Some years later down the road, they were made aware of this and now they would like to buy back their service.

So what does this government do in this effect to remedy the situation? They don't sit down with the union and say, okay how can we fix this matter? No. What do they do? They say it's the union's fault, and they forced this matter into the courts.

I'm told that there's approximately 240 to 250 employees affected by this change. It's not a large number. I don't think it would entail a large number of dollars, but it would make quite a difference to those employees that are affected by it.

And I would urge the government to . . . rather than drag this issue out through the courts as long as possible and make life difficult for their own employees — people who have served them well — I would urge them to settle this matter so that those people who are approaching retirement age would have those added benefits. Most of these people were part-time people, people who haven't had long years of service. So a year or two would make quite a difference when it comes to retirement and that sort of thing.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would . . . as I said initially, on first glance of this Bill it seems to be a fairly routine Bill. But given some of the history and some of the things that have come to light in recent days, I would think that this Bill deserves further study. And therefore I would move to adjourn the debate. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Debate adjourned.

(1545)

Bill No. 14

The Assembly resumed the debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Serby that **Bill No. 14 — The Film Employment Tax Credit Amendment Act, 2000** be now read a second time.

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And it's a privilege to be able to participate in the debate this afternoon on The Film Employment Tax Credit Act, Bill No. 14.

Just be way of a very quick summary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because we've dealt with a wide range of topics this afternoon already. The film employment tax credit was introduced in our province in 1998 as a way to grow the film industry here in Saskatchewan.

In a nutshell, film producers receive a tax credit from the Saskatchewan government for employing Saskatchewan people on their productions. The theory is that this will cause more television and film production to be shot here in the province.

And it's true, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the film industry is one where there is a lot of competition, not only between our provinces here in Canada but of course around the world in various places that are vying to be locations for film and television production.

Americans have taken a great interest in our province indeed, and other Canadian locations, primarily due to a fairly reasonable cost of labour, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and of course the exchange rate which not only benefits the film industry in our province but benefits so many other industries as we are an export-dependent province. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's heartening to realize that with Acts, Bills like this and with other words that we hear from the government, they too are beginning to realize the importance of trade to our economy.

For a good number of years now the members on the government side of the House have become pro free traders, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They once derided free trade; they were bitter opponents of the Free Trade Agreement and the free trade debate during the late 1980s. They decried it as the end of Canada as we knew it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It would be the end of the Dominion as we knew it. And now they are completely in favour of it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They're in favour of free trade because they know how important it is for our province to be able to compete around the world and to rely on export markets as is the case with the film industry.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the tax credit is to encourage filmmakers to come to Saskatchewan instead of going to other provinces or other locales around the world that have similar incentives. And the tax credit seems to be paying off. It seems to be paying off, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's fairly early to tell at this point, but film production has doubled to just over \$50 million annually in our province. And there's no doubt about it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that that is good news.

I think it's worth noting though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the same principles, the very same principles at work in . . . with respect to the film tax credit, can also be made to work in favour of any other industry in our province — any other industry which we want to grow in our province. And I guess that's the issue that the official opposition would want to bring to the government's attention.

Here you have a great example of a tax credit, or in other words lower taxes working in an industry. And we have a wonderful opportunity to expand that same principle to the other industries of our economy that could also use a tax credit.

In the election, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party was the only party that was proposing to do something about the 8 per cent small business tax that we have in our province, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Wall: — And there wasn't really word one from the members on the other side of the House during the election on that.

I just encourage them to use the same principles that they are prepared to laud that are at work in this film tax credit and let

that . . . let those principles go to work on behalf of other sectors in our economy, indeed on behalf of every single business sector in our economy if we do something with the small business tax, Mr. Speaker.

I can tell you too from personal experience in my life. Before I was elected, I was an economic development officer for the city of Swift Current, Mr. Speaker. And that was our primary . . . that was the main tool that we used in terms of trying to attract . . . not only attract new business, Mr. Speaker, but actually to try to facilitate the growth and the expansion of existing businesses in our city.

We understood that businesses in our community wanted to pay as little tax as possible. They're concerned about the bottom line as they should be . . . both new businesses looking for a location and those businesses who are wanting to expand their business. And it's interesting to note that the city of Swift Current for the last six years has been able to hold the line on its municipal tax rate, Mr. Speaker. And yet the total revenue to the city of Swift Current has grown by quite significant amounts, Mr. Speaker, so much so that it can afford much more aggressive capital programs. It can continue to offer the kind of services it wants as a local government, and it's been able to do that, Mr. Speaker, by holding the line, by avoiding tax increases.

And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that these members opposite could learn a little bit from the city council of the city of Swift Current, both the current council and previous councils that have proven if you can run a fiscally stewardly operation, if you can hold the line on tax increases and in fact avoid them, and even in the last budget provide a bit of tax relief to your commercial sector, you can actually expand the tax base, Mr. Speaker. It's something that the government didn't understand during the election and they still don't understand it.

It's been proven across our country and around the world. It's certainly been proven in my community that you can actually keep taxes down. You can actually cut taxes and in the long term you're going to be attracting business. You're going to be encouraging business to expand. Those businesses pay the taxes, Mr. Speaker, and you wind up with more tax money than you had before you started a program of either tax cuts or at least holding the taxes down.

And here we are talking about a Bill where the government seems to have understood that principle. But sadly, Mr. Speaker, we need them to understand that the principle applies to every other sector of the economy.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most successful tax incentives that we employed as a city of Swift Current was the oil and gas incentive. It was a tax incentive we tried to use to attract the oil and gas industry to our community, Mr. Speaker.

And there's no doubt about it, that since the 1950s the oil industry has played a major role in the economy of the city of Swift Current and the surrounding area. The problem has been, however, that when the price of oil starts to flatten out or even come down and it remains low for any sustained period of time, the oil companies generally . . . the service companies generally may not have that deep roots in our community and may be able

to move back to southeast Alberta.

In fact, many of those companies service our oil and gas industries while just maintaining their permanent operations in southeast Alberta. And so we've tried to develop an oil and gas incentive program that would provide some land tax incentive to oil- and gas-related industries that would locate in the city of Swift Current in a more permanent way.

We identified a certain area of the city where we were going to do that. It's called Sidney Light Industrial Park on the west side of the city where generally the oil and gas companies like to be. And we offered fairly low-cost land to oil and gas service companies and a three-year tax incentive.

And as it turns out, within about . . . within several months actually, Mr. Speaker, 9 of the 10 lots were sold and the businesses had, had located there.

And the hon. member for Regina Victoria I think is wondering how this ties to the Bill. And the sad reality, Mr. Speaker, is that they haven't figured out how tax incentives in other industries, in other sectors of our economy can work as well as they appear to be working in the film sector, Mr. Speaker.

And that's the point of the official opposition on this Bill. Let the principles that work with respect to the film tax credit go to work on behalf of Saskatchewan entrepreneurs, businessmen and women in every sector of the economy.

In the case of the oil and case industries, as I, as I was mentioning earlier, Mr. Speaker, there were a number of new jobs created. In fact the tax incentive was contingent on there being new jobs. Very similar to this particular program where the Saskatchewan film tax credit requires people to hire Saskatchewan people before they can enjoy the credit, so too did the oil and gas incentive program that I speak of attach any benefit of the program — in terms of tax relief or even affordable land — to the creation of new jobs in the city of Swift Current.

And, Mr. Speaker, that program has worked extremely well. And of course after three years, all of those businesses who are . . . which are new to the city of Swift Current will be paying property taxes, Mr. Speaker. They'll be paying the full municipal property tax; they'll be paying the full school tax, Mr. Speaker. And they will be employing people who will live in Saskatchewan . . . in Swift Current homes and pay taxes there. They will employ people whose kids will be enrolled in our schools, and who will also pay school tax on their private residence.

And so, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that this Bill employs the same principles that I'm speaking of in terms of tax incentives that actually will grow your tax base and your economy, we certainly, we certainly support that.

It's interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the, that the province of Saskatchewan has the second-highest small-business corporate income tax rate in the Dominion at 8 per cent. That's behind only the province of Quebec which is about 8.9 per cent, and the province of Ontario is currently 8 per cent but slated to fall to 4.7 per cent within the next six years — by 2006, Mr.

Speaker.

And so while we have some much-needed tax relief for this new and burgeoning industry, the film industry, there is an issue I think that we should be dealing with — when we talk about Bills like this — with respect to other industries. Our neighbouring province to the west has a business tax rate at 6 per cent; British Columbia is 5.5 per cent, and Manitoba is 7. Well, Mr. Speaker, it's a fairly basic principle of business — of either small, medium, or large business — that you have to compete with your closest competitor, your closest neighbour.

Well in our case clearly our closest competitor is Alberta. They have a 6 per cent small-business tax rate; we have 8. The next closest is Manitoba — I'm speaking of where I'm in, in Swift Current — Manitoba's at 7 per cent, Mr. Speaker. I remind you again, we're at 8. And British Columbia is at 5.5, Mr. Speaker, and we're at 8 per cent.

And so, Mr. Speaker, the point that we're trying to make with respect to this particular Bill is that we need to offer the same sort of tax competitiveness for every other industry as we do, as we are talking about with this particular Bill with respect to the film industry.

Mr. Speaker, there was only a . . . there was only one party in the last provincial election that was talking about the small-business sector and I'm sure the film industry comes under that umbrella. Everybody in the election campaign, Mr. Speaker, was paying lip service to the small-business sector. They were all saying, especially on that side of the House, that the small-business sector was the most important engine of our economy.

But, much after that, Mr. Speaker, there was precious little in the platform of either of the parties that now sit to your right hand. The only party that was talking about small-business in a meaningful way, Mr. Speaker, was the Saskatchewan Party. And the good news, Mr. Speaker, is that the Saskatchewan Party will continue to talk about small-business. We'll continue to talk about tax competitiveness. We'll continue to talk about tax relief for small-business men and women who are creating jobs as they are creating in the film industry with similar tax relief.

And so, Mr. Speaker, with those remarks and the encouragement for the government to apply the principles that we're talking about in terms of the film tax credit to other sectors of the economy; I would now move that the debate be adjourned.

Debate adjourned.

The Assembly adjourned at 3:59 p.m.

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