



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

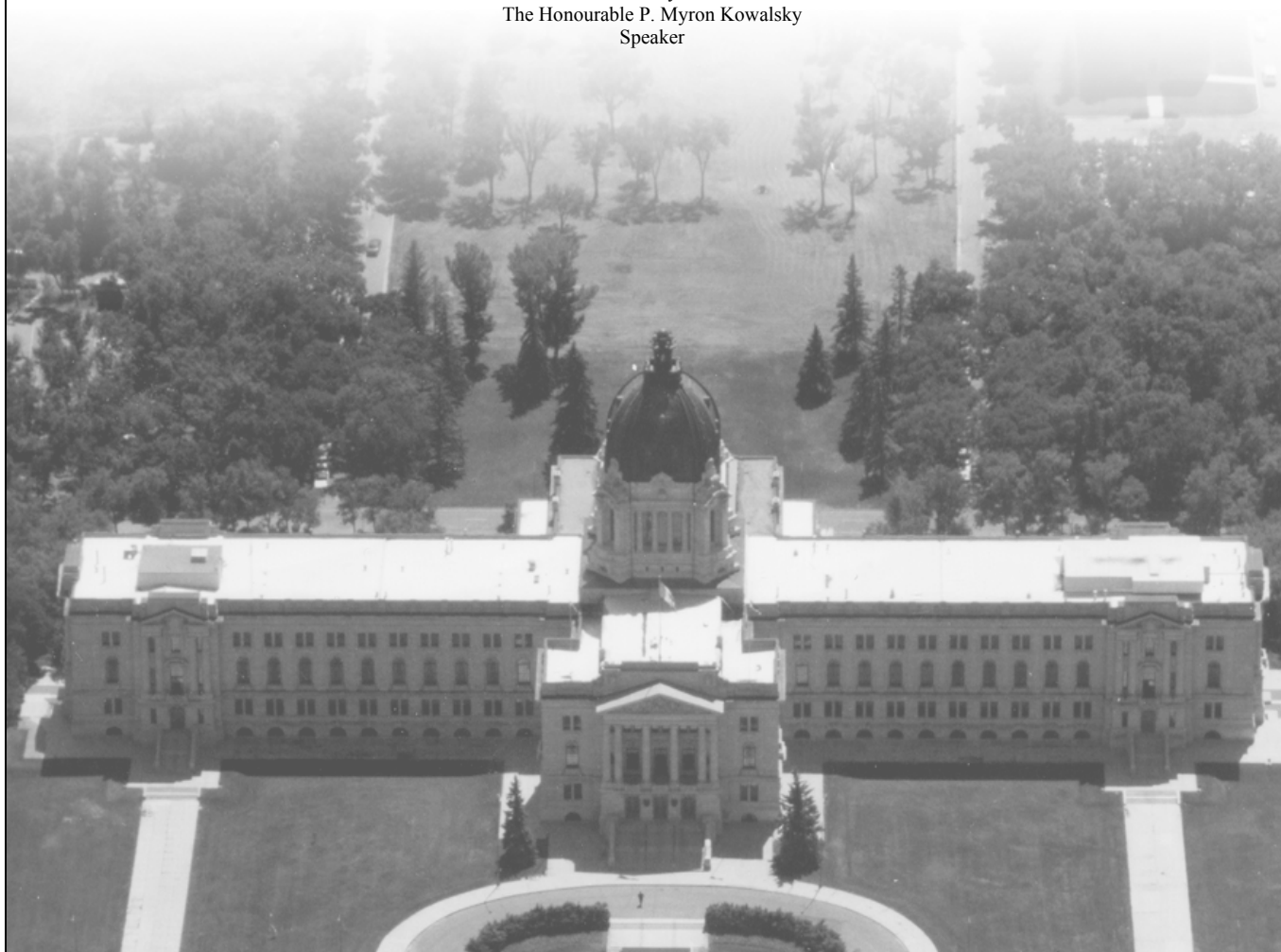
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

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



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition regarding Crown leases in the province of Saskatchewan. And I read the prayer:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present to you is signed by the councillor . . . reeve and councillors of the RM (rural municipality) of Silverwood.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to present a petition on behalf of producers in the Southwest concerned about lease renewal opportunities. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take the necessary steps to ensure that current Crown land lessees maintain their first option to renew those leases.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition has been signed by producers from the community of Val Marie.

I so present.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition regarding the water level in the Qu'Appelle Valley. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water level of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm and uncertainty this dispute has caused.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people in the Fort Qu'Appelle and Lebret area.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

**Ms. Harpauer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have a petition today with citizens concerned about an increase in the PST (provincial sales tax) and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to rule out raising provincial taxes in 2004/2005.

And the signatures, Mr. Speaker, are from Aberdeen, Cudworth, Birch Hills, and Vonda.

I so present.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of Saskatchewan who are concerned with the raise in the PST and the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to rule out raising provincial income tax . . . or provincial taxes in 2004/2005.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Aberdeen, Vonda, Prud'homme, Cudworth, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise with a petition from citizens of southwest Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned about the deplorable condition of Highway 43 and the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to repair Highway 43 in order to address safety concerns and to facilitate economic growth in rural Saskatchewan.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Gravelbourg, Palmer, and Coderre.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Arm

River-Watrous.

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens opposed to possible reduction of services to Davidson and Imperial Health Centres:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Bladworth, Davidson, Kenaston.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of seniors in west-central Saskatchewan and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that citizens of Unity and district remain in the community for this necessary service that will bridge the gap between independent living and long-term care.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good folks from Unity, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of citizens concerned with the water level in the Qu'Appelle Valley lakes, and the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to do everything in its power to work with the First Nations people and the federal government to bring a prompt end to the dispute so that the water levels of the Qu'Appelle River system can return to normal and end the economic harm and uncertainty this dispute has caused.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And, Mr. Speaker, the signatures to this petition come from the communities of Fort Qu'Appelle, Mission Lake, Fort San, and Pasqua Lake.

I so present.

## READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 47, 49, and 65.

## NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: will the Premier ensure that men and women of Saskatchewan serving in the Canadian armed forces in the theatres of conflict such as Afghanistan, Bosnia, Haiti, and the CHMS Toronto serving in the Persian Gulf, receive full income tax exemptions similar to the federal income tax exemptions for such persons?

I so present.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming: how much money did the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority spend in the 2002-2003 fiscal year on freight costs to ship alcohol to each of the 81 SLGA operated liquor stores in Saskatchewan?

I so present.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Immigration: for fiscal year 2003-2004 what was the maximum number allowed under the provincial immigration nominee program, what were the total number of applications received that year, and how many applications received approval?

And I also have that same question for the previous five years.

I so present.

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 15 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: in the Regina area, what is the fee paid by the coroner's office to Spectrum Transfer Company per transfer done in 2001? Further to that, is that contract tendered? If not, why? I have the same question for 2002.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, today with the large number of guests who are both in the Chamber and in some of the rooms and corridors of the legislature, I want to extend a general welcome to all who are visiting the legislature today.

Among our guests, Mr. Speaker, will be family, friends. I see in the guests in the Chamber today a number of colleagues, former MLAs. I see those who sought office in this Chamber. But perhaps more importantly, Mr. Speaker, I see in this Chamber and through the corridors of the legislature, people from across our province who are giving of themselves in leadership in a variety of capacities — whether it be in on behalf of working people, in on behalf of the business community, in on behalf of community-based organizations. Here today in the legislature, Mr. Speaker, we are graced with in some ways the leadership of the great of province of Saskatchewan, and I would want to welcome all of our visitors today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the official opposition I want to join with the Premier today in welcoming all of the guests to the Legislative Assembly. It's days like this that underscore for all of us who are here on a daily basis that this Assembly belongs to the people of the province of Saskatchewan. And on today, budget day, we too wish to join with them and encourage members to welcome all the guests to the Legislative Assembly today.

**Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Library Education Bursary

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, thanks to the library education bursary program more student librarians are building their future right here in our province. One such student is Lorraine Salt from Saskatoon. Ms. Salt is the successful recipient of the 2004 library education bursary program.

This annual \$5,000 bursary offers funding to a student enrolled or accepted in a master of library and information sciences program. As a recipient of this bursary, Ms. Salt will return to her home in Saskatoon and work right here in Saskatchewan.

Ms. Salt is currently studying at the University of Toronto, and she credits the bursary program for making a significant difference in helping her complete her master's degree.

Mr. Speaker, this program was established through a partnership between the Saskatchewan Library Association, the Multitype Library Board, and Sask Learning. It's an excellent example of Saskatchewan libraries working together to reach

common goals and helps our province attract and retain professional librarians.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Lorraine Salt as the successful recipient and acknowledge the Saskatchewan Library Association and the Multitype Library Board for their commitment to the future of student librarians in our province.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to talk about four individuals who are with us today in this very busy and crowded legislature. Joanne, Ryan, Fabian, and Kim, are this year's interns with the Saskatchewan legislative internship program. These four individuals have been assisting both caucuses since January and they will continue their work until the end of July.

Mr. Speaker, the internship program, which has been in operation for three years, allows senior university students to participate directly in politics. They provide a valuable service to legislators through their knowledge of politics and policy and their skills in research and writing.

Mr. Speaker, not only do MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) benefit from having interns around, but the program serves as a unique educational tools for interns to extensively study Saskatchewan politics and it gives interns a wealth of practical work experience. We all know, Mr. Speaker, of the importance of engaging youth in our democratic political process so that it may remain vibrant and strong.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, this is the last year for the current internship program. The program was a small yet important step in spreading the message that we need our youth to be engaged in politics so they can help shape its future.

I would like to thank the current interns and their predecessors for all their contributions and wish them all the best in their future endeavours. Hopefully they will stay here and contribute to our wonderful province. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

### Robin McCallum Memorial Youth Conference

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the honour and the great pleasure to attend the Robin McCallum Memorial Youth Conference held every year in my constituency of Cumberland in the community of Pelican Narrows.

Mr. Speaker, this conference for northern youth was named after Robin McCallum. Robin was a bright, good-hearted individual, a credit to his family, and a young man with so

much potential. Unfortunately Robin died tragically at the age of 21. But for the last eight years, in memory of Robin McCallum, youth from across the North gather in Pelican Narrows to discuss and to look for solutions to the many challenges they face today.

Mr. Speaker, this conference focuses on youth, but it's really about community. This is one way that communities across the North, and especially Aboriginal communities, are helping themselves. Gatherings such as this are an integral part of a healing process, especially in the healing of the spirit that is resulting in stronger individuals, stronger communities.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud to attend this conference and I congratulate and thank all those involved — parents, organizers, sponsors, facilitators, and especially the young people — for their dedication and their hard work on behalf of the people of northern Saskatchewan. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

#### **Kenaston Student Wins Saski Award**

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan Ski Association is the provincial governing body for winter skiing in Saskatchewan. Within the association is a volunteer support network that subscribes to the concept of moving to inclusion. To this goal, certified instructors promote skiing for the disabled through training on safe, adaptive equipment.

(13:45)

I'm very proud to say that Kenaston student, Sheridan Jewell, has won the 2004 Saski Prairie Cup in the category of cross-country sit skiing this past January. Sheridan has bravely overcome his disability and has been a member of the Snobuddies of Saskatoon for two years now. The club meets twice a week and continues throughout the year.

I believe it is very important that the remarkable achievements of young students like Sheridan and others are duly recognized. By continued support by the public and private sectors, these achievements will continue to be a source of inspiration to the people of Saskatchewan.

Sheridan isn't sure how he will spend his \$100 prize but said he will have fun when the time comes.

I would ask that all members join me in congratulating Sheridan Jewell of Kenaston.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Moose Jaw North.

#### **Agreement Between Sask Water and Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan**

**Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Saskatchewan government believes in maintaining a practical

balance between public ownership and private enterprise. It is an approach that has served this province well in the past and will continue to serve it well in the future.

In keeping with that balanced approach, earlier this week an agreement was signed between Sask Water and the Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan that defines a clear role for private sector firms who do water and waste water work in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the memorandum of understanding means that consulting engineers and geoscientists will be doing the engineering work for the vast majority of Sask Water projects. There is going to be significant work in this area in the next few years. Business opportunities and jobs are going to result from this working arrangement between the public and the private sector. It's a situation where everyone wins.

Mr. Speaker, many communities will be getting needed upgrades to their water systems and, in some cases, their waste water systems. And as a reflection of an increased number of projects that will take place this year, this agreement will mean over \$3 million to CES (Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan) members in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will agree that this balanced approach, this marriage of public and private interests, is not only practical but most importantly works for the benefit of all.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Carrot River Valley.

#### **Tri-Town Thunder Wins Junior B Championship**

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the communities of Carrot River, Zenon Park, and Arborfield are quite proud of their Junior B hockey team who has recently become the NSJHL (North Saskatchewan Junior Hockey League) champions, beating out the Saskatoon Chiefs in the fifth game of a best-of-seven series.

The Tri-Town Thunder was formed in 2000. At the time it was thought by many that this team would have many years of hard work ahead of them before realizing success. The achievements that this team has accomplished not only says a lot about the dedication and the skill of the players and coaches but also the support they received from their communities.

The Tri-Town Thunder is now competing for the Junior B provincial championship. They are facing off against the Regina Capitals and on March 26 against the Capitals they won 5 to 2 in the first game of a best-of-five series. The following evening, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they were defeated by the Capitals. The Regina Capitals will be coming to Carrot River for the third and fourth game of the series this weekend. And, Mr. Speaker, I am certain that the stands will be packed at the Carrot River arena to cheer on the hometown team.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members here, and especially those members who represent Regina constituencies, to congratulate the Tri-Town Thunder, along with coaches Trevor Blevins and Rob Wallington, on their recent accomplishment and wishing them victory in the upcoming games.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatchewan Rivers.

#### Farm Safety Calendar Features Student Artwork

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, since 1996 Saskatchewan Labour has sponsored an art contest focusing on issues related to safety around the farm. The winning entrants have their work featured in the farm safety calendar.

This contest is open to all students from kindergarten to grade 9. Prizes are awarded to four age groups in three categories — machinery safety, yard and livestock safety, and chemical, electrical, and fire safety.

Besides having their artwork included in the calendar, winners also receive cash prizes. This year the grand prize winner received \$100. There were 12 first prize winners of \$50, and 12 second prize winners of \$25.

Mr. Speaker, this year's grand prize winner is Rebecca Clark, a 10-year-old student from Dr. Isman Elementary School in Wolseley. Rebecca's poster was chosen from over 4,000 entries and highlights the hazards that can be associated with snowmobiling. As she described it to me, there is snow covering the barbed wire and a snowmobiler is coming towards it and doesn't know it's there.

This contest is an important initiative, Mr. Speaker, one that provides an opportunity for young people to really think about working and playing safely. Since 1996 more than 24,000 students have entered the contest and the calendars have been distributed to over 220,000 homes and businesses.

I ask all of my colleagues to join me in congratulating Rebecca Clark and all the other winners and contestants in this year's farm safety contest.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

#### Strike Action at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Learning. Today marks day six of the SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) strike — day six of disrupted classes, rising costs, and uncertain futures for thousands of students and their families.

Today picket lines are up again in Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, and Prince Albert. Today many of the students are sitting at home wondering if their studies will be taken away from them. And today many students took their concerns about the SIAST strike to the steps of this very legislature, Mr. Speaker. They want to know what the minister and his NDP (New Democratic Party) government is doing to bring an end to this strike.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister make the commitment today that no SIAST student will lose their year of study because of the SIAST strike?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to tell the Assembly that in fact there is progress on the SIAST strike as both sides are at the bargaining table today and have been this week. Working through a conciliator provided by the Department of Labour, they have been able to come forward to start working on a very complicated set of agreements.

I want to assure the member, as I have on a number of occasions, that the approach that is being taken to achieve a collective agreement through the normal bargaining process is the preferred one, and that as at this point, there is no reason to believe students will lose their year of study.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, many students have contacted me to express serious and growing concerns that the SIAST strike will cost them their year of studies. The Saskatoon Nursing Students' Society is warning that the SIAST strike could mean, and I quote:

Program completion could be delayed a year with serious consequences for students, their parents, and the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP's failure to put forward a fair wage offer triggered the SIAST strike and now students and their families are paying the price. What steps is the NDP government taking to get the two sides to come to an agreement? What steps is the minister taking to fix the problem his government has created?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member, who is a new member here, that I have never seen a collective agreement reached on the floor of this legislature. The only place that this will be reached is at the table. The two parties understand that, they have gone back to bargaining, and I am hopeful that it will result in that.

I trust that the member opposite is providing students with the assurance that they at this point should not be worried that they will lose their year of study, that in fact the two parties are back and are bargaining in good faith, and I am trusting that that will

get us to a collective agreement.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister seems to think he has a handle on the collective bargaining process. But last night the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour president, Larry Hubich, called the NDP's handling of the labour negotiations a joke. Well SIAST students and their families aren't laughing, Mr. Speaker. Here's what one nursing student said in a letter we received a few days ago, and I quote:

I'm at home because my teachers are on strike. I thought one of the key parts of the action plan on health care was to get nurses trained as quickly as possible. Allowing the strike to continue will jeopardize my future. But more importantly, it'll jeopardize Saskatchewan health. Can you really put a price on that?

Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister to answer this Saskatoon nursing student's question. Is the NDP government willing to sacrifice the future of this young nursing student and jeopardize the future of Saskatchewan health?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, we are in a situation with SIAST where there is a labour dispute. It is the right of the workers to withdraw their services and they have done so in a way which minimizes its impact on students. This is not to say it is not disruptive. It is undoubtedly disruptive. But this is the right that they have under the process.

We have undertaken to bring a conciliator into the process. This has helped in terms of bringing the two parties back to the table. And I think that the member opposite and members of that party should respect the collective bargaining process and the right of working people to negotiate.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. While we welcome all visitors to the legislature, we ask that members only participate in the debate, and that includes the applause as well. And I would ask all visitors to respect that tradition of this legislature.

I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

### Taxation Policy

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, there has been a great deal of speculation, media speculation, that the Premier plans to raise taxes in today's budget. Just last fall the Premier was re-elected on a promise that he would continue to cut taxes. In fact the Premier's election platform contains at least four references in four

different occasions to cutting taxes, Mr. Speaker; not one word about raising taxes. Is the Premier going to betray voters today by raising taxes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, over the course of these past several days the opposition Saskatchewan Party has been making reference to the campaign document, the campaign platform document of the New Democratic Party in the last election — a campaign platform, Mr. Speaker, which I would remind the public is still available on the Web site of the New Democratic Party.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what the opposition of course conveniently does not do is quote complete sentences from the campaign document.

So I have the campaign document in front of me, Mr. Speaker. Let me refer to page 15 which concentrates on the matter of taxation. And the headline to the page reads, Mr. Speaker, "Continue to cut taxes responsibly — without jeopardizing health and education," Mr. Speaker.

And in the text of this commitment we speak of three significant issues of tax change: one, the full implementation of the provincial income tax reform; two, a change for workers who will bring their tools to work; and three, removal of the PST on energy efficient appliances.

Number one completed; number two under work; number three completed, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the Premier's entire platform document also in my hands. It's 42 pages long. And on pages 1, 6, 30 — I make reference to those pages where the Premier clearly states that there will be tax cuts or will continue to increase the tax cuts that are allocated. I'd be pleased to point out all of the other occasions that the Premier would like to see in his very own document.

Can the Premier though show me one place in this platform when he talks about raising taxes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I have the colour version here. I'll be glad to provide a copy to the member. It reads on page 6, to which the member just referred:

(We will) continue to provide sustainable — not reckless — provincial tax cuts that . . . (do not) jeopardize health and education.

The commitment we made to the people of Saskatchewan is



that we will not put health care and education in jeopardy, Mr. Speaker. And you will see in the budget of today how we are acting on that commitment, Mr. Speaker. We are going to provide the means necessary to provide public health care for the people of Saskatchewan with the resources that our province can muster.

Now I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and I ask members of the general public, as they did in November of last year, to compare the commitments here to the commitments that were being made by that member, that new leader, the former leader, and so on, about tax cuts.

What were they promising in November, Mr. Speaker? They were promising unsustainable tax cuts. They were going to get rid of the small-business tax. They were going to cut the corporate tax in half — a package they declared themselves would cost \$260 million. I ask, Mr. Speaker, is that credible?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I have the black and white version. And the black and white version of the photo of the Premier still looks the same. And in fact, his signature still looks the same as probably what occurs in that coloured copy. It is the document of this Premier, Mr. Speaker.

And I ask the Premier: can he point out one place in his election platform or one time during the election campaign, when he talked about raising taxes?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, let me talk to you and to the members about what is in this platform document. Here is a commitment, Mr. Speaker, that talks about our commitment to publicly funded and publicly administered health care in this province. We commit that our health care will remain publicly funded, publicly administered, and premium free. We commit to reduce waiting lists for surgery and diagnostic tests. We commit to improve the lives and the fortunes of front-line caregivers, Mr. Speaker.

(14:00)

Just yesterday we were introduced to Mr. Macklin who came to this House to tell us the circumstances that faced he and his wife, his deceased wife, as they awaited an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) test. Mr. Macklin last night said to the people of Saskatchewan, said to the people of Saskatchewan, that he would be pleased to provide more tax revenue to government if he was sure that tax money was going to health and education. Does the critic, does the leader over there, support that position?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I know it's difficult to remember names, but for *Hansard* I'd like to refer to the fact that the gentleman's name was Mr. McBain.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier can't point to one place where he talked about raising taxes because it doesn't exist. Time and again throughout the last election campaign the Premier said the platform was affordable and sustainable and would not require higher taxes. In fact he promised that further tax cuts were on the way. It's now clear that the Premier wasn't telling the truth and a tax hike might be on the way.

Mr. Speaker, why did the Premier run such a dishonest campaign?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order. Order. Members, I've had an opportunity to review the record of last day where the member for Canora-Pelly referred to a member in this Assembly in a manner that I believe to be unparliamentary. Members are not to reflect or make statements that would reflect on the characters of other members. All members in this Assembly are regarded as honourable. I would urge all members to be cautious and to temper their remarks and make sure that there are not any personal slurs in any remarks they might make.

I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My apologies to Mr. McBain who visited us here yesterday. But Mr. McBain I believe represents in many ways the vast majority of Saskatchewan people who say to their government, who say to their government, we want you to put our priorities as your priorities.

And as I meet the people of Saskatchewan, they tell me — they told me in the campaign, they've told me before the campaign, and they've told since the campaign — that our priority, number one, is the provision of health care services in this province; number two, providing educational opportunities for our young people that we can make this province ready for this next generation.

Those are the first and second priorities of the people of Saskatchewan and they want their revenues, their resources, their tax dollars to be focused in that regard and it is the commitment of this government to do just that.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, let's just review all the times the Premier told the truth about a tax hike. His election platform said his promises were affordable and sustainable and that he will continue to cut taxes — not raise taxes, Mr. Speaker, cut taxes.

In fact in the whole election campaign he didn't say one word about raising taxes. Then after the election the Premier said there is no appetite for a tax hike and he has no mandate to raise the PST. But now it appears the Premier is about to raise taxes

and somehow he expects voters to believe that's what he was saying all along.

Why did the Premier make promises in the last election campaign that he was not intending to keep?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in that campaign I, and my party, our candidates talked about these kinds of commitments — that we were going to make Saskatchewan a green and prosperous economy.

We talked about investing in public health care. We talked about investing in education. We talked about making this a province of opportunity. And, Mr. Speaker, we talked about making this happen under a balanced fiscal circumstance, which has been the record of our government as opposed to the record of members opposite, Mr. Speaker.

We have heard clearly from the people of Saskatchewan their priorities are health care and education, just as we heard from Mr. McBain yesterday in this building. And, Mr. Speaker, that was our commitment in the campaign, that remains our commitment, and we are turning that commitment into reality in today's budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

### Education Property Tax

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Premier. Last October the Premier made a campaign stop in Yorkton. While he was there the Premier told reporters and voters that the NDP election platform provides the room to receive the recommendations of the Boughen Commission on the funding of education.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm that his word last October was good? Will he confirm that today's NDP budget will follow through on the Premier's personal commitment — and I repeat, personal commitment — to reduce the education tax on property?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the member who addresses the question I recall was not present in Yorkton at the time I made these statements, understandably. The fact of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker, when we outline a platform, we outline it for the four-year term, and within this four-year term we believe there's ample financial room to undertake and achieve the campaign commitments that we made. And he asks about the budget today. He should just stay in his seat, just wait a few more minutes, just a few more minutes, and he will understand this government's . . . this government's commitment to dealing

with some of the property tax issues.

And he will see in the weeks and the months ahead this government's commitment to dealing with the entire question of the funding of education and the whole package of recommendations that Commissioner Boughen has brought forward.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I happened to be in Yorkton that day, and I don't remember one time the Premier said if elected that he was going to raise taxes for the people of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, during last year's election the Premier promised to cut taxes. He promised to reduce property taxes. At least that's what the Premier and his NDP campaign platform led people to believe. And today Saskatchewan people are going to find out whether they can trust this Premier. Voters are going to find out whether the Premier was telling the truth.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier confirm that today's budget will honour his personal commitment to cut education property tax?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the member should just wait a few moments when the Minister of Finance is soon to rise in his place, and he will hear in detail how this government intends to — in this budget year — speak to some of the issues around municipal funding, around education funding, and around the matter of related property tax. And he should just wait over the course of the next several weeks, months, and if I may say, years, for the implementation of the recommendations that have been brought to us by the Boughen Commission.

We are consulting with the people of Saskatchewan, we're consulting with school trustees, the school boards; we're consulting with teachers, we're discussing . . . discussing and consulting with our educational partners and with our municipal partners; because this government has made a commitment to dealing with the whole question of the funding of education and the delivery of education to the people of Saskatchewan. Why have we made that commitment, Mr. Speaker? Because it is among our top priorities.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melfort.

### Hospital Closures

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is also for the Premier. Three years ago the Fyke Commission on health care recommended the closure or conversion of many hospitals. However, the Premier stepped in and said no. In fact, the NDP's action plan on health care calls for, and I quote, "a

province-wide network of hospitals; no closure or conversion of hospitals.” Mr. Speaker, the Premier released the action plan on December 5, 2001 and personally guaranteed there’d be no conversion or closure of hospitals.

Will the Premier keep his word in today’s budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in today’s budget what you will see and what the member will see — and I hope applaud — a record amount of funding for health care in Saskatchewan.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — A record amount of funding. Again I say, why is this? Because this is the number one priority and we are going to devote new resources. And, Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to work with other provinces, with the Council of the Federation, to ensure there will be a greater level of federal funding to health care in our province and across Canada.

That said, Mr. Speaker, we are also working with our health care partners — working with the districts, working with health care providers, working with the professionals — to ensure that we can make the kind of change that will take those very valuable and precious health care dollars to ensure they are providing the most necessary of services, the priority services. And we will take that discussion and create in Saskatchewan yet again the sustainable, publicly funded administered medicare that we all treasure.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Melfort.

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Mr. Speaker, the Premier went even further in his comments back in December 2001. Here’s what he said, and I quote:

If we were to select 20 of our smallest community hospitals and close them, I am told the savings would result in about \$14 million. This represents about two days of funding for the Department of Health. The answer to financial stability is not to be found in the conversion or closure of small hospitals.

Does the Premier plan to honour his words delivered in December 2002 in this budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, as all present will soon hear when the Minister of Finance stands in his place, in this budget you will see the single largest, the single largest contribution to publicly funded health care in this province’s history. Mr. Speaker, that’s what you will see.

But what have we seen, Mr. Speaker, in the course of the days that this Chamber has been sitting? Well I’ll tell you what we’ve seen. We’ve seen an opposition that hasn’t changed an iota from the opposition that left here post . . . pre the election.

We see an opposition that stands daily, daily on one hand saying, you cannot raise the taxes, you cannot do that, but what you must do is provide more money and more funding for everything in government. They went in the campaign and they said, Mr. Speaker, we can cut all of these taxes but we can raise all of this program spending and we can balance the budget. The people of Saskatchewan rejected it then and they reject it now.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

### Pre-Budget Commitments

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the opposition that sits across from the Premier is an opposition today that understands there are more than just the two options that this Premier believes there to be. There’s more than just the option of increasing taxes or cutting spending. There is the option of growing the province of Saskatchewan . . .

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Wall:** — . . . of having a long-term vision for a growing and prosperous economy that can deliver the kinds of things to Saskatchewan families that they deserve. Mr. Speaker, in a few moments we’ll find out if the Premier is a man of his word.

He committed to no tax increases. Certainly he said he had no mandate for a PST increase. He told SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) that the status quo on property taxes was unacceptable, and there would be relief.

He said that his government would not close hospitals, Mr. Speaker, and we’ll find out soon if he’s a man of his word. So to the Premier, through you, will he keep his promise to his people of this province, or will he betray them in this budget?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, in this budget he will see the commitments of this government reflected, the commitments that we made to the people in November of last year — a commitment to build a green and prosperous economy. He will see in this budget tools and techniques to build that green and prosperous economy. He will see in this budget the tools to provide opportunities for our youth. And he will see in this budget, as he and others have never seen before, a commitment to publicly funded and publicly administered health care. That’s what he will see.

What he will not see, Mr. Speaker, is the kind of platform that was directed to the people of Saskatchewan by the Saskatchewan Party in the last election. They talked about growing Saskatchewan. It was a platform not to have

Saskatchewan growing. It was a platform to have Saskatchewan owing. That's exactly what it would have done, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, they're so proud of that platform. You know what, Mr. Speaker, tune up the Web site of the Saskatchewan Party; you can't even find the platform any more. They've erased it.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, what we'd like to see in this budget that'll be brought down in moments, what we'd like to see, what the people of this province would like to see, what they'd like to determine is whether or not they have placed their trust in a Premier whose word can be trusted, because he was pretty clear on the issue of not increasing taxes. He was pretty clear on indicating that he had no mandate to increase the PST. He's been pretty clear that his government would not close hospitals, that his government would deliver property tax relief to rural and urban Saskatchewan, and they want to see if he'll keep his word. Once again to the Premier: yes or no. Will he keep the promises he made to Saskatchewan people?

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

(14:15)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Premier.

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, the answer is absolutely.

We will commit today to the people of Saskatchewan as we committed in the campaign, as we committed in the campaign, that we will be about the task of building a green and a prosperous economy. We will be about the task of providing opportunities for our young people in education and new opportunities in our province. And we will be about that fundamental — that fundamental of public policy — which is universally accessible, publicly funded, and publicly administered medicare in our province. And we will bring to bear today in this budget a package of resources that will exceed any package of resources that has been provided for health care in the province's history.

Mr. Speaker, you bet we will maintain that commitment.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 22 through 24 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to questions 22, 23, and 24 have been submitted.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to submit the estimates and supplementary estimates accompanied by a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

**The Speaker:** — Would you please rise for the message from Her Honour. The message is as follows:

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for the 12 months ending March 31, 2005, and supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the service of the province for 12 months ending March 31, 2004, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly. (Signed), Lynda Haverstock, Lieutenant Governor, province of Saskatchewan.

Please be seated.

I recognize the Minister of Finance.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That Her Honour's message, the estimates, and supplementary estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina Douglas Park, and seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That Her Honour's message, the estimates, and supplementary estimates be referred to the Committee of Finance.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY (BUDGET DEBATE)

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the outset, I would like to join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in welcoming our guests and the stakeholders who have joined us here today.

I also would like to — with your indulgence — welcome a special group from Regina who are joining us today to hear the budget. They are 40 French immersion students from Campbell

Collegiate's social studies 30 — sciences sociales 30 class — accompanied by their teachers, Francine Brassard and Ian Mitchell. They are presently studying government and Confederation — gouvernement et confédération.

And I'm going to do the rest of the speech in English, Mr. Speaker. But I did want to single out one student in particular and that is my son Justin, who's a member of that class.

I would ask all my colleagues to join with me today in welcoming these students here today, in doing so also to encourage them in their studies.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, today's budget is about priorities and about values. It is about a province we will shape through conscious choices, move forward by action, and deliver to future generations.

In Saskatchewan our essential programs and services go beyond social responsibility; they are moral obligations. Education and health care, these are the basic institutions that contribute to our communities and provide opportunities for our young people. Yet, we can no longer demonstrate our commitment to these sacred public services through increased funding alone. Times have changed; the economy has changed. We have to change as well.

This budget responds to the fiscal reality in Saskatchewan. This budget exemplifies restraint and demands change because Saskatchewan people understand the value and the inherent importance of prudent financial choices.

So we are addressing our financial picture today; we are not delaying until tomorrow. We are the architects of our own future, acting now to preserve the essential services that define our province, our principles, and our ideals, acting now to secure our future; acting now to create future opportunities for our youth, making Saskatchewan ready for the next generation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, over the past decade the government has greatly enhanced the accountability and transparency in our fiscal operations. We have introduced balanced budget legislation, interim financial reporting, summary financial statements with our public accounts, and department performance plans and reports. Adding to these, the province's financial statements are now presented in the legislature within 120 days of our year end. These are just some of the changes we have made to our financial reporting.

Today we are moving forward again with the introduction of a summary financial plan. This plan is a consolidated financial look at all government departments, Crowns, agencies, and boards. It is another step in this government's efforts to ensure Saskatchewan citizens have access to their financial information.

Mr. Speaker, it is my great pleasure to introduce this document today.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, our economy, with its dependence on natural resources and commodities, is subject to cyclical fluctuations. We can experience great swings in commodity prices or production. As examples, I will note the price of oil or the lower crop production brought on by drought.

These fluctuations can and do result in unexpected demands on the provincial treasury. Sometimes the result is increased expenditures; sometimes it means falling revenues. The only constant is that these changes cannot be anticipated or incorporated into the government's budget and financial plan.

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that Saskatchewan has had some form of fiscal stability fund — a rainy day account, if you like — for many years. At one time this fund represented retained earnings in the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority.

We now have the Fiscal Stabilization Fund, a stability mechanism that is more transparent and accountable. This fund is a responsible and prudent approach to dealing with the economic fluctuations and unexpected events that occur naturally in our economy and can have a drastic impact on our provincial finances.

The Fiscal Stabilization Fund has been instrumental in dealing with the volatile fiscal issues that we have experienced over the past three years. Drought, forest fires, and BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) all demanded unbudgeted provincial support. We were there to provide that support through payments to agriculture producers and fire suppression initiatives. Altogether we have contributed over \$200 million in cash payments and \$207 million in loans to meet these emergencies over the past three years.

It is well known that these extraordinary events combined with spiralling costs in our health care system, have created a gap between revenues and expenses. Mr. Speaker, this government acknowledges that gap — a gap derived from the needs that exist in our society; a gap created by the need for essential public services and support programs.

We have put money into health care. We have put money into education. We have invested in agriculture and in highways. We make no apologies for these investments. They were necessary. They were right. These were choices made available to us in large part through the Fiscal Stabilization Fund. The fund has helped us through the challenges over the last few years and helped us balance our budget. It has served us well and operated as it was intended.

Yet, Mr. Speaker, we cannot live on savings indefinitely. We are committed to living within our means. We are committed to finding the greatest efficiency from every public dollar. Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting our 11th consecutive balanced General Revenue Fund budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Balanced, balanced with the benefit of a \$158 million transfer from the Fiscal Stabilization

Fund. This transfer is a 40 per cent reduction from the last fiscal year. We will further reduce the gap between our revenues and expenditures next year. And by the fiscal year 2006-2007, our revenues and expenditures will balance. In the fourth year of the financial plan I am presenting here today, we will generate a \$42 million surplus.

Mr. Speaker, the budget I present here today is balanced. The four-year financial plan I present today is balanced. This budget reflects our commitment to sound financial management.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — And, Mr. Speaker, this budget reaffirms our commitment to the promises made in the Throne Speech, including education and opportunities for our young people, building a green and prosperous economy, providing the best public health care in Canada, and making Saskatchewan the most affordable place to live and raise a family in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have a plan. We know where we are going. We are securing our financial future. We are committed to the long-term prosperity of this great province.

Mr. Speaker, we have faced significant challenges in the last year that have forced us to confirm our spending priorities and examine our spending levels in all areas of government. This government has met these challenges with responsive leadership and decisive action.

During the budget process we conducted an extensive and thorough expenditure review. Our goal was simple — to hold the line and reduce expenditures. We will continue this process.

Everyone has had to make sacrifices. It is our commitment to fiscally responsible governance. We are holding the line on salaries in government — government departments and Crown corporations and for the politicians as well.

Mr. Speaker, I am sorry to say that some people will lose their jobs today. Mr. Speaker, it is with great regret that I announce that approximately 500 seasonal, temporary, and permanent staff will be impacted by this budget. To help ease the job losses resulting from this announcement, restricted early retirement will be offered to some employees.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, sacrifices have been made across government, funding was reallocated, priorities maintained.

(14:30)

Twelve departments have had their budgets reduced this fiscal year, excluding the departments of Health and Learning. We have managed to hold spending increases to \$15.6 million or point seven per cent. These two departments — Health and Learning — two of the highest priority areas for the people of Saskatchewan, now account for almost two-thirds of our annual budget.

We have not abandoned these sectors. We will not abandon these services. Health and learning are our highest priorities for Saskatchewan people. Their preservation demanded the difficult

choices we made.

Across government our goal was to cut administrative costs while retaining our valued public services. Some of the steps we are taking include the following.

In Agriculture we will reorganize extension services, consolidating 31 offices into 9 and adding a new call centre. The result will be a more efficient system of service delivery and an annual cost reduction of \$2 million.

The Department of Environment will reorganize and save \$6 million annually. They are creating efficiencies by redeploying their staff to better address their mandate.

We will reduce administrative costs in the Department of Health by over \$2 million.

These were not easy choices, but decisions that must be made.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take a moment to discuss federal transfers — in particular, equalization. Equalization is a simple idea made complex with an intricate funding formula that uses a number of factors to determine provincial entitlements.

Originally created in the 1950s, equalization was constitutionally mandated in 1982. The program was created, and I quote from the Constitution, Mr. Speaker:

... to ensure that provincial governments have sufficient revenues to provide reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

In Canada each province's ability to raise revenue varies. Equalization payments from the federal government help to ensure all the provinces — the affluent and the less affluent — can provide comparable levels of public service. The program takes into account all provincial and local revenue sources, population, and the economies of five provinces in defining a standard fiscal capacity.

This standard defines whether a province will receive equalization payments. These provinces, with a lower-than-average ability to raise revenues, are designated have-not provinces and are entitled to receive unconditional cash transfers from the federal government.

A recent paper by Professor Thomas Courchene indicated that Saskatchewan's natural resources are still being treated inequitably under the equalization funding formula used by the federal government. At times, we are penalized at rates exceeding 100 per cent of our energy revenues.

Saskatchewan recently received a one-time payment of \$120 million to cover equalization inequities dating back over 15 years. This was a positive step in the short term, but we still need progress over the long term. We need to resolve the inequities in the equalization program now and not five years from now when the program is renewed.

We are calling for the same treatment of our oil and gas revenues that are provided to Atlantic Canada. We also want a

return to the previous mining tax base. We are open to discussion with the federal government and have lobbied for the changes I mention. We want to find a solution to the problems in equalization funding.

The program should not discourage economic growth. Our natural resources should benefit our citizens, not penalize them. Saskatchewan is being penalized unjustly. The equalization formula is not fair; it is not equitable. This must be changed.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, the delivery of essential services is neither easy nor inexpensive. There is a cost that must be paid to protect our quality of life, to preserve those public services essential to Saskatchewan citizens.

To maintain our essential services, provide assistance to our communities, and support our young people, this budget contains a number of revenue initiatives. These decisions were not made easily and were pursued only after all expenditures were reviewed and spending held or cut in most areas other than health or education.

We have announced changes in a number of fees and licences to more accurately reflect service costs.

We are also introducing revenue measures that we will implement including, effective midnight tonight, an increase in tobacco tax by one and a half cents per cigarette; and increasing the markup on bottled beer by 26 cents per litre effective midnight, April 24, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, we will change the current fuel tax exemption on farm gasoline to 80 per cent of all bulk purchases effective April 7, 2004. And the annual farm rebate for retail gas purchases is eliminated beginning this calendar year.

And beginning in 2005, indexation of personal income tax brackets and credits will be modified annually. Changes will balance inflation protection for taxpayers with the government's fiscal pressures.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, effective midnight tonight, the provincial sales rate will increase from 6 per cent to 7 per cent. This last measure, this last measure will provide \$136 million in revenues this year — revenues required to help fund the \$160 million increase in health care and the \$45 million increase in education.

Mr. Speaker, while the PST has been increased, it is not being expanded. Saskatchewan will retain its narrow PST base. Current excluded goods and services will continue to be exempt. This includes key family essentials like utilities and prescription drugs. We will continue with important exemptions to support economic growth and agriculture including direct agents for manufacturing, construction services, fertilizer, and other farm inputs and farm machinery. And, Mr. Speaker, we will also continue to exempt restaurant meals.

Mr. Speaker, to lessen the impact on low-income earners, I am also announcing an \$8 million annual increase to the Saskatchewan sales tax credit. Beginning July 1, 2004, families

will see an increase in the maximum from \$274 to \$350. Single parent families will have their maximum benefits increased to \$275.

The decision to increase the PST was a difficult one, but I must point out that Saskatchewan still has the second lowest provincial sales tax rate in Canada. The increase to the PST will raise an additional \$136 million this year, an amount that I must point out, while substantial, will not cover the \$160 million increase for our health care system. Combined, these revenue measures will raise over \$180 million this year and help ensure that Saskatchewan citizens can continue to rely on the essential services we have clearly heard are important.

Mr. Speaker, I pointed earlier to the fact that this budget is about choices. It is about choices that reflect the values and needs of Saskatchewan people. Health care is a primary need, an essential service that our citizens depend on. We have heard repeatedly that our publicly funded health care system must be the first priority of this administration. Quality care is what Saskatchewan citizens have stated must be the number one concern of our government. We recognize this need and are working to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of the system.

Saskatchewan will spend a staggering \$2.7 billion on the health care system in this fiscal year. Seventy-two per cent of our overall increase in operating expenses, \$160 million, is going towards health care. This year's increase in health care funding is 6.3 per cent and we'll target those priority areas identified in the action plan on health care.

The extra funding will help our regional health authorities to reduce wait lists for surgeries and to expand diagnostic services; \$1.8 million will be directed to extended operating hours for CT (computerized tomography) scans and MRI services.

Of the \$160 million in new health funding, \$115 million will go towards salaries, benefits, and medical fee for services so that we can continue to attract and retain the best and brightest health care professionals to Saskatchewan.

We will increase funding to the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency by \$6.6 million. This money will help provide increased treatments, the introduction of new drugs and drug therapies.

Mr. Speaker, in light of ever-increasing costs of prescription drugs, we will increase funding to the provincial drug plan by 10 per cent to assist people with high drug costs or low incomes.

Mr. Speaker, fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is a disease with long-term complications that will affect the child in our society for years. Today we are announcing \$1 million for prevention projects, enhanced diagnostics, and assessment for individuals with cognitive disabilities including fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — We will invest \$46 million in facilities and equipment, Mr. Speaker. We will invest \$19 million for diagnostic equipment. Part of those funds will allow

us to purchase a new CT scan machine. This also includes 2 million for a new MRI for Regina.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — We will invest \$27 million in health facilities that will ensure all previously announced projects can go forward.

Although these are significant increases, changes in health delivery are required and will include further administrative efficiencies, changes in staff mix, facility closures or conversions, and reductions in long-term care bed numbers.

Health care now accounts for 44 per cent of our operating expenditures. The increased funding exceeds both the growth of our economy and the rate of inflation. Earlier I indicated that the \$160 million increase in health care spending will exceed the \$136 million we will receive from the 1 per cent increase in the PST.

Provincial health care costs have increased at an average of 6.6 per cent each year since 1999. This is simply not sustainable. At this rate health care will consume more than half of our annual operating budget in just a few short years.

Saskatchewan is the birthplace of medicare — a system valued and respected around the world for the benefit that it has provided for all citizens; a source of pride for all Canadians.

Mr. Speaker, we have increased the health care budget to a record \$2.7 billion. Yet even with the increased funding, we understand that changes must be made.

In the coming year we will assess how our health dollars are spent and ensure that we are conducting our operations with the greatest efficiency possible. We will question how health care is delivered in our province. This is an immense task, but we will not hesitate in our effort to seek out and implement those reforms available to preserve this valuable system.

We have already made significant progress in improving our health care system. We have the Action Plan for Health Care that is guiding reforms in our health care system. The plan is an evolving document that has improved efficiencies and created changes in front-line care.

(14:45)

I want to assure everyone that a well-funded public health care system remains the highest priority for this government, but we must continue with changes to the system that will ensure its long-term sustainability, or we will watch it collapse.

Health care is a priority for Saskatchewan people; it is the most valued public service we have. Today we want to encourage a debate on its future, not just in government, not just in the legislature, but also in our homes and in our communities. We want to get people talking about the entire health care system. We need to talk about what it means to us, what it costs, and what the future should be.

To create a better understanding of health care costs, we have

included a paper in the budget summary book. We are also sending out information to households across the province. I hope this information sparks a discussion amongst our citizens and harnesses the ideas and actions that will strengthen our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, federal funding used to represent almost 50 per cent of health and social program spending. It was cut drastically in the mid-1990s and now accounts for only 16 per cent of total provincial health and social program costs in Canada. The Premier has joined with other premiers in urging Ottawa to increase its contribution to 25 per cent of provincial health and social spending. Together we are a unified voice demanding from Ottawa a greater financial commitment to the public health care system.

Mr. Speaker, it is time for the federal government to honour its commitment to stable, consistent health care funding. Ottawa must address its responsibility for social programs and step forward with more equitable funding arrangements.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — We are certainly not alone in our efforts to preserve publicly funded health care. Across the country every province is facing similar challenges in delivering health services. They are facing the same escalating costs, the same demands on the system, and the same burden of funding the system more and more on provincial dollars. I would add that rising health care costs are also a major concern for individuals and governments in the USA (United States of America) and across Europe.

In Canada, the reliance on provincial tax dollars is creating concern across our country. We are working in partnership with every province. Through shared purpose we will continue to push the federal government for better funding.

We are encouraged by the Prime Minister's recent comments that the federal government is prepared to enter into meaningful discussions on implementing the Romanow Commission report. Prime Minister Martin has pointed to the report as the basis for reform and sustainability in the health care system. We will work with the federal government to achieve this.

But make no mistake; better funding is also required to preserve medicare. We have a national health care system, and it requires national support. Mr. Speaker, we can preserve the publicly funded health care system. We must preserve the publicly funded health care system.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, this budget is about positioning Saskatchewan to have strong, continued, economic and social growth in the years ahead. We have a positive outlook for our province. Government forecasters predict our real GDP (gross domestic product) growth will reach 2.6 per cent in 2004 — a positive indication that our economy is strong. Mr. Speaker, our economy is strong. There is confidence in our continued growth, and across our province there is a belief in Saskatchewan's prosperous future.



Earlier I spoke about the budget process and how we conducted a thorough expenditure review. Priorities were maintained and funding reallocated. I am proud to announce the following new and enhanced initiatives.

We are strengthening families with funding to the Kids First program, allowing 60 new families to enter the prenatal program and receive support. We will add over 200 new child care spaces so that working families have access to safe, affordable daycare for their children. We will increase Saskatchewan Child Benefit payments for single parent households and increase support through the Saskatchewan employment supplement for low-income working families. We are assisting families in securing a home of their own by investing \$12.6 million into affordable housing construction under the provincial housing policy framework. Together these add up to a better quality of life for Saskatchewan families and a brighter future for Saskatchewan's children.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — In our communities, we have partnered with municipalities. As promised, we are continuing our support with a further \$10 million in this budget — a 13 per cent increase in municipal revenue-sharing grants.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — We will build on the \$900 million investment in our highway system. This year we will resurface 325 kilometres of the provincial highway system, investing \$295 million into road construction and maintenance. We will continue twinning both the Trans-Canada and Yellowhead highways.

Mr. Speaker, we will also invest in a safe communities initiative designed to fight organized crime.

For our young people, we will invest \$500,000 into the Young Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan program. The foundation will provide 150 youth entrepreneurs with loans of up to \$15,000 each to turn ideas into sound business ventures. This year we will launch a summer student employment program called the Green Team for young people interested in environmental management and energy conservation. Mr. Speaker, through the centennial student employment program, we will invest \$2.2 million into youth employment. This funding will create 593 employment opportunities for Saskatchewan youth.

We will invest \$500,000 for the Aboriginal Employment Development Program, creating 17 partnerships promoting Aboriginal training and employment in Saskatchewan.

We will increase the Innovation and Science Fund by 25 per cent to \$9.8 million.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — The additional investment will support leading-edge research opportunities at our universities.

This year, we will invest \$425.4 million into post-secondary education. This is 2 per cent more than last year's budget and

will increase training seats in the Nursing Education Program, increase research funding, and continue our support for the College of Medicine. We are increasing the post-secondary graduate tax credit from \$350 to \$1,000 incrementally over the next four years.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — This year the credit will rise to \$500. Operating grants to school divisions will increase by over 3 per cent to \$527.9 million, addressing teachers' salary increases from the current collective agreement.

This year we will also contribute \$24 million to capital projects for Saskatchewan's K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) sector and \$16 million for post-secondary facilities. Education, Mr. Speaker, is the greatest investment in our future. We are committed to a quality education for our young people to make Saskatchewan ready for the next generation, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — In agriculture we will continue supporting our producers. Our agriculture sector has encountered many challenges over the past three years. The discovery of BSE has hit our livestock industry with great force. This government responded with \$55 million in income support for our livestock producers.

Two years of drought have also had an impact. Crop yields are low. Farm incomes are affected, and we have responded with income support programs and crop insurance. We will continue supporting our agriculture producers with over \$1 billion over the next five years for the agricultural policy framework.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, we are committed to building a green and prosperous economy for Saskatchewan. New and ongoing initiatives include a PST rebate for Energy Star compliant appliances. This will help reduce greenhouse gases and create a cleaner climate. Operations at the Office of Energy Conservation will continue with conservation initiatives with Saskatchewan's residents, businesses, and farmers.

This government, Mr. Speaker, will continue to encourage economic growth. We will double the funding for the Small Business Loans Association with \$10 million in funding. These extra funds will increase the loan limits by 50 per cent for emerging and established small businesses.

Key to growing our province are a skilled workforce and employment opportunities. We are investing \$211 million in job training and job creation.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Investment Saskatchewan will invest \$50 million back into the Saskatchewan economy. We will contribute \$860,000 to the ethanol fuel tax rebate program to encourage development in the ethanol industry and help reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, a budget represents more than numbers. Optimism for the future drives our economy. The Saskatchewan spirit is inspired and powered by an unshakeable desire to succeed and move forward. Saskatchewan citizens want to create opportunities, not just for themselves but also for their children and succeeding generations. I believe today we have moved one step closer to that future.

The role of a government is not always to do what is popular. Often it is about doing what is right and doing what is needed. This was a difficult budget to prepare and to deliver but one that was necessary. It is a budget that will preserve our vital public services. This is a plan that will move us forward to greater fiscal stability and sustainability. This is a plan that will secure Saskatchewan's future. This is a plan that will make Saskatchewan the finest place to live, work, and raise a family, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** —I move:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

And I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance, the member for Regina Douglas Park, and seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the opposition critic, the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to stand in this Assembly again for the fourth consecutive year, I believe, as the official opposition's Finance critic.

Mr. Speaker, I have not had the opportunity to participate in the Throne Speech debate which has occurred over the last number of days. And this being my first opportunity, I'd like to make some special comments, if I may, Mr. Speaker.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the people of Canora-Pelly, a constituency that was redesigned with the last redrawing of the boundaries and a constituency now that stretches from Hudson Bay down to almost 6 miles from Yorkton. And the constituents have honoured me with my third re-election and I want to thank all of those people in Canora-Pelly for placing their trust in me.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to extend to my constituency assistant, Bob Blahay, and my part-time help,

Renee Parsons back in my Canora office, a sincere thank you and great appreciation to them for all the work that they do back in the constituency office to deal with concerns that come to my office. And I want to thank them for being very, very active and very good at what they do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate all my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly. Fifty-seven other MLAs were elected in November 2003, but a special recognition to the 10 new members who have been elected for the first time in this Assembly — I believe five on both sides of the House. I want to congratulate those new members and extend to them all the best in their efforts as they serve the people of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to extend to a member, the member from Yorkton, most sincere best wishes that he get well. The member from Yorkton and I have been acquaintances for probably 30-some years. And I recall, Mr. Speaker, that we used to play a pretty competitive fastball game against one another and a pretty competitive hockey game. And we've had our chances to share comments in this Legislative Assembly. But I do want to extend to him a most sincere get well and hope that we see him back here in this Legislative Assembly.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, a special thank you to people that are not here. My father and my step-mother, Peter and Sophie Krawetz back in Invermay and my in-laws, John and Eleanor Maleschuk who . . . in Theodore who I know are watching and have been very, very instrumental in assisting me and helping me through nine years as an elected member, and I want to thank them for their continued support and love.

Mr. Speaker, all of us have difficulties when we, when we leave home to travel to Regina, to travel distances where we are away from our family. And this gives me an opportunity to update the people in this Assembly and all the people in Saskatchewan that my daughter Lindsay is now in her second year of university and is enjoying public administration here in Regina.

I understand that about two weeks ago in one of her classes she had a guest instructor come in to talk about health care and the delivery of services in Saskatchewan, and that person was none other than Roy Romanow. And through to . . . Maybe I hope that upbringing of her mother's as being a teacher, she did question Mr. Romanow at the end about some of the comments that he made, and he answered those, that question very well, to her liking, and I want to congratulate her for her continued educational efforts.

My son Bryce lives in Strasbourg, in his third year teaching and I want to congratulate him and his fiancée Olivia on announcing their engagement, and we'll be looking forward to a family wedding pretty soon, Mr. Speaker.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Most importantly though, most importantly, Mr. Speaker, my wife Gail continues to be the principal of Invermay School, and works very diligently at that job of principal and senior English teacher.

And this is a very busy week for her. This is the week when regional drama competitions take place, and the little community of Invermay — kindergarten to grade 12 school of 155 students — Invermay has been a regional winner before and is going to be competing in a competition on Friday, so I know she's been working very diligently with her students and I wish her well.

My final appreciation, Mr. Speaker, is to my colleagues on this side of the House for their support, for their encouragement, to staff in the Saskatchewan Party caucus office for assisting me in doing my job. But most importantly I want to thank the leader, the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, Her Majesty's Official Opposition, for entrusting in me the job of Finance critic and deputy leader and I want to thank him for that.

Mr. Speaker, last year during the election campaign, the Premier of this province looked the people of Saskatchewan squarely in the eye and made many commitments. Today we have seen those commitments fall by the wayside.

To use the strongest possible terms I can, Mr. Speaker, it was a campaign filled with promises that this Premier had no intention of keeping. Today the people of Saskatchewan have every right to feel betrayed by this Premier, who spent 28 days falsely accusing others of having a hidden agenda while all the while harbouring a hidden agenda of his own.

During the campaign the Premier told the people of Saskatchewan that the government's finances were such that all of his commitments could be met without raising taxes. Today we see that not only are many of those commitments not being met, taxes are going up as well.

Even after the election was over and this Premier elected, he told the people of Saskatchewan he had no mandate to raise the PST. Today, he raised the PST.

During the campaign this Premier made a commitment to begin the process of lowering property taxes. Today, not a word about property taxes. During the campaign this Premier promised to continue indexing income tax. Today, he de-indexed income tax. Mr. Speaker, that's a tax hike.

During that campaign, Mr. Speaker, we heard the Premier say that only he had the best interests of public employees at heart. Today, we see hundreds of those employees betrayed by the Premier.

During that campaign, this Premier posed as the great defender of health care in this province. Today, we learn he will close more hospitals at a time when waiting lists are at critical levels.

During the campaign, this Premier promised an integrated health sciences centre to improve health care in Saskatchewan. Today, not a word about a health sciences centre.

During the campaign the people of rural Saskatchewan heard from a premier who vowed to defend their interests and to revitalize rural Saskatchewan. Today, we see a premier who is obviously continuing the cynical NDP tactic of pitting rural people against urban. It is a tactic that the Saskatchewan Party

finds reprehensible and one that is destructive for all people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, when I came to this legislature in 1995, there were many things that the then premier did that I disagreed with. But the fact of the matter is that when Mr. Romanow was premier, the budget was balanced and the surpluses recorded during that time were divided equally between program spending, tax reductions, and payment of debt.

Contrast that with the situation we see today, Mr. Speaker. Today we see a huge tax hike and significant program cuts. And even then, Mr. Speaker, this Premier can't balance the budget; expenditures exceed revenue. This is the fourth consecutive deficit budget.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Like Roy Romanow, we hear this Premier talking about a balanced approach. Except for this Premier, balance means higher taxes, program cuts, and higher debt. Mr. Speaker, this is a budget that shows a premier's complete failure to grow the economy of this province. This budget is a product of a premier whose vision is so limited he is content to manage the decline of Saskatchewan instead of striving for growth and reaching our true and unlimited potential.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Mr. Speaker, today's budget will only further strangle economic growth in Saskatchewan and will continue us on the path of the worst job creation record in this country. The NDP has no plan to grow this province and that's shameful, Mr. Speaker.

But what is perhaps even more shameful than that is the spectacle of a premier so desperate to cling to power that he was willing to say anything to anybody to gain their support. And he did this knowing full well that he would not live up to the commitments he made the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. He did this deliberately and intentionally. And for that, the people, the people today have a right to feel totally and utterly betrayed by this Premier.

Mr. Speaker, over the next few days my colleagues and I will have much more to say about the very specific areas of this budget, one that I think does not meet the needs of the people of the province of Saskatchewan as promised by this Premier and his colleagues during the last election campaign.

So at this time I will move adjournment of debate.

**Some Hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Canora-Pelly that debate be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Resumption of Budget Debate**

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the member for Moose Jaw North:

That debate on the motion that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government be resumed on Thursday, April 1, 2004.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader, the member for Regina Douglas Park, and seconded by the member from Moose Jaw North:

That debate on the motion that the Assembly approves in general the budgetary policy of the government be resumed on Thursday, April 1, 2004.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the House do now adjourn.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

**The Speaker:** — This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. I thank all our guests for their attendance here today.

The Assembly adjourned at 15:12.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING PETITIONS

Toth .....	263
Elhard .....	263
McMorris .....	263
Harpauer .....	263
Bakken .....	263
Huyghebaert .....	263
Brkich .....	264
Dearborn .....	264
Hart .....	264

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk .....	264
--------------------	-----

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Dearborn .....	264
Draude .....	264
Weekes .....	264
McMorris .....	264

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Calvert .....	265
Wall .....	265

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Library Education Bursary	
Atkinson .....	265
Saskatchewan Legislative Internship Program	
Draude .....	265
Robin McCallum Memorial Youth Conference	
Beatty .....	265
Kenaston Student Wins Saski Award	
Brkich .....	266
Agreement Between Sask Water and Consulting Engineers of Saskatchewan	
Hagel .....	266
Tri-Town Thunder Wins Junior B Championship	
Kerpan .....	266
Farm Safety Calendar Features Student Artwork	
Borgerson .....	267

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

Strike Action at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology	
Cheveldayoff .....	267
Thomson .....	267
Taxation Policy	
Krawetz .....	268
Calvert .....	268
Education Property Tax	
Bjornerud .....	270
Calvert .....	270
Hospital Closures	
Gantefoer .....	270
Calvert .....	271
Pre-Budget Commitments	
Wall .....	271
Calvert .....	271

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Yates .....	272
The Speaker .....	272

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### TABLING OF ESTIMATES AND SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Van Mulligen .....	272
--------------------	-----

#### MOTION FOR APPROVAL OF BUDGETARY POLICY

#### (BUDGET DEBATE)

Van Mulligen .....	272
Krawetz .....	278

**Resumption of Budget Debate**

**Van Mulligen** .....280

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Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

Hon. J. Beatty  
Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation  
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