



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

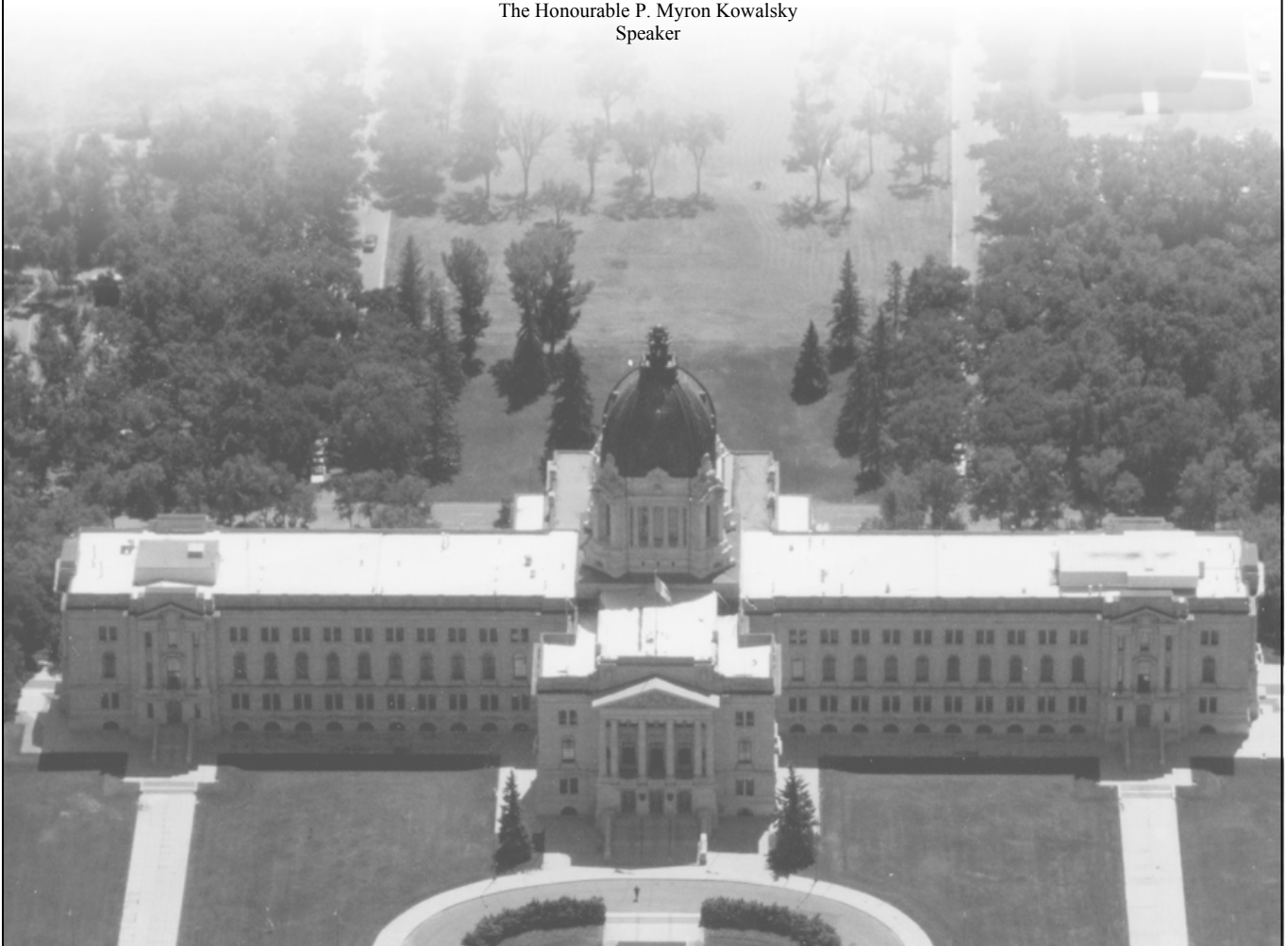
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills to present a petition concerning crop insurance premiums and the recent hike in coverage there, or in costs anyway.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed from producers, or by producers from the community of Leader.

I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have another petition signed by people in my constituency of Rosetown-Elrose that speaks to recent changes to the crop insurance program which resulted in large premium increases for insured farmers while overall coverage is reduced. Mr. Speaker, the prayer of the petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the provincial government to take all necessary actions to reverse the increase in crop insurance premiums and the reduction in coverage.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Wiseton, Beechy, and Demaine.

I am pleased to present this petition on their behalf.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, once again I rise with a petition from citizens in my constituency that are extremely concerned about the deplorable condition of Highway 43. And the prayer 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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by the good citizens of Gravelbourg, Thompson Lake, and Ponteix.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of my constituency in Saskatchewan that are concerned with the government's handling of the Crown land leases. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are from Glaslyn, Shell Lake, Leoville, Victoire, Rabbit Lake, and Spiritwood.

I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens opposed to possible reductions of services to Davidson, 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, Imperial health centres be maintained at the current level of service at a minimum of 24-hour acute care, emergency, and doctor services available, as well as lab, public health, home care, and long-term care services available to users from the Davidson, Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens from Davidson, Kenaston, and Saskatoon.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition for fairness for Crown lease holders. The prayer reads:

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 is duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Richard, Leask, and Blaine Lake.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan who are concerned with the living facilities available to seniors moving from their homes before long-term care. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary 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 in duty bound, our petitioners will ever pray.

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

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 no. 63, 65, 69, 72, and 83.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority: in the fiscal year 2003-2004, what was the total amount of discount in each discount category for beer purchases made by Saskatchewan businesses? How many individual businesses received discounts in each category?

I also ask . . . Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority: in 2003-2004 what was the net revenue from VLTs placed in businesses in each of the categories used by the SLGA for beer purchase discounts?

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 23 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how much money did the

Kelsey Trail Regional Health Authority pay in provincial sales tax during the fiscal year 2002-2003?

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for each of the regional health authorities.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two groups, two introductions to make today, two very important groups.

The first group that I would like to introduce are a group of young people, all of whom are here from the city of Regina. They joined with me this morning, Mr. Speaker, in a Premier's round table. Each of them have been selected by their particular high school. Each of them came with some very, very thoughtful, and if I may say in some cases, very thought-provoking presentations and we had a very, very good discussion, from at least my point of view.

And I would want all members today to welcome these students, all of whom I believe are in grade 12 with the exception of one who is in grade 11. And I would like to introduce them by name and perhaps have them stand as I introduce them.

From Thom Collegiate, Becca Berthiaume; from Winston Knoll Collegiate, Sean Bowns; from Scott Collegiate, Amber Buffalo Pasqua; from Sheldon-Williams Collegiate, Jared Clarke; from Archbishop M.C. O'Neill High School, Gina Hochban; from Cochrane High School, Madhova James; from École Monseigneur de Laval, Meagan Kenzle; from Luther High School, John Kohlie; from F. W. Johnson Collegiate, Ashley Marchi; from Campbell Collegiate, David Poon; from Michael A. Riffel High School, Nathan Wollbaum; and from Miller Comprehensive High School, Mark Yakichuk.

And they are joined, Mr. Speaker, in the gallery by those who have helped host them today, Scott Rodonets, Benn Greer, and Kit Stacyszyn.

I would ask all members to welcome these exceptional young people, representative of the future of our great province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And then, Mr. Speaker, I would . . . I'm very, very pleased to be welcoming some other very special guests today. They are seated in the west gallery. And they are members of the production team and the team that has put together the phenomenal success story of the CTV (Canadian Television Network Limited) hit series, *Corner Gas*. And we are very pleased to welcome this group to the legislature today.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, *Corner Gas* is filmed in Rouleau, Saskatchewan about 50 per cent and about 50 per cent of the shooting is done here at the Saskatchewan . . . Canada-Saskatchewan Sound Stage in Regina. It's co-produced by Saskatchewan Vérité Films and the Vancouver-based 335 Productions.

And I would like all members to greet those who are here today. And again, a few individual introductions: Mr. Brent Butt, the *Corner Gas* creator and as we all know, born and raised in Tisdale, Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Virginia Thompson, who is the president of Vérité Films, the Saskatchewan-based co-producer of *Corner Gas*.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — David Storey, 335 Productions, the Vancouver-based co-producer of *Corner Gas*.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Rick Lewchuk, senior vice-president of CTV program planning and promotion and from North Battleford, Saskatchewan.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And with them, no stranger to this House, Valerie Creighton, CEO (chief executive officer) and film commissioner of SaskFILM, here in Regina.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, our welcome as legislators to the folks from *Corner Gas* and we wish them extremely well on the next 18-episode series that begins filming in a matter of weeks here in Regina and in Rouleau. All the best on the coming season.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join with the Premier in welcoming the members from *Corner Gas* and all the other people that are a part of the production of *Corner Gas*. I'm not sure, but there has been a move afoot in the constituency to rename it Dog River, instead of Indian Head-Milestone. As the member representing that area, so I'd like to welcome them here and hope they enjoy the proceedings.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to the members of the Legislative Assembly the Neighbourhood Recreation Project group. And they are seated in the west gallery and they have the cool sweatshirts on.

I had the pleasure of meeting Myke Agecoutay — if you can wave, Myke — the program coordinator, and a few of the students at the Sask Sport awards last month. The Neighbourhood Recreation Project and its staff are doing some

great work for inner-city youth in Regina.

The youth who take part in the program have the opportunity to attend movie nights and participate in all kinds of recreation activities such as baseball, basketball, football, volleyball, and floor hockey. The NRP (Neighbourhood Recreation Project) program operates under the File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council and it's the only program available to youth seven days a week in that part of the city.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in showing a warm welcome to the students and staff of the Neighbourhood Recreation Project.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to my colleagues in this Legislative Assembly, it's a pleasure to introduce John and Joan Barnsley who are seated in your gallery.

Mr. Speaker, they are attending question period here today and I'd ask all members to welcome them to their Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Seated in your gallery are a group of public servants from various government departments including Agriculture; Food and Rural Revitalization; Community Resources and Employment; Corrections and Public Safety; Culture, Youth and Recreation; Environment; Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Health; Highways; Industry and Resources; along with Justice.

Mr. Speaker, these public servants are spending the day at the Legislative Assembly. They have met with various people. They'll have an opportunity to meet with myself and someone from the official opposition.

I want to on behalf of the government welcome them all to the Legislative Assembly and thank them for the important public services that they provide to the people of our province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Chisholm: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition it is my pleasure, through you, Mr. Speaker, to also welcome our public servants on their tour today of their legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Legislative Assembly a constituent of mine, David Allen Hall. Mr. Hall tells me that he was once a constituent both of the member from Saskatoon Nutana and the member from Saskatoon Riversdale, but their loss in my gain.

Mr. Hall was in the air cadets for two years, 1980 to 1981. He is the first wheelchair air cadet in Saskatchewan and in Canada, as a member of the 107 Spitfire Squad in Saskatoon.

He is currently a board member of Saskatchewan Association of Community Living and that's what brought him to the legislature here today. He was with the delegation from Saskatchewan Association of Community Living that met with MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) this morning at breakfast.

He's the Vice-Chair of People First of Saskatchewan, a self advocacy group. Mr. Speaker, the last time that Mr. Hall was in this Chamber was as an aide to Lieutenant Governor Wiebe, so this is a return after a long absence for him.

Today he entered the building by the Prince of Wales entrance. He was one of the first official entrants as an aide to the Prince of Wales when it was opened on that occasion. I am very proud to serve him here, and very honoured by his support, and I hope that all members of the House welcome him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to join my colleague, the member from Swift Current, the Leader of the Official Opposition in welcoming Joan and John Barnsley to the legislature. They're constituents of mine and live near the town of Congress.

But also to you and through you, Mr. Speaker, to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce two more constituents of mine, Clara and Ernest Hansen who are from Rockglen. And I would ask all members to join me in welcoming them to their legislature here this afternoon.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Members of the Assembly, it's my pleasure at this time to welcome to the Assembly an independent officer of the Assembly, and that is Mr. Gary Dickson who was appointed the acting Information and Privacy Commissioner on November 1, 2003 and he's been acting ever since.

He is here today for his formal appointment, following which there will be a tea in the library where all members and friends and co-workers are welcome in the reading room of the library.

With Mr. Dickson today is his wife, Arlene; and assistant to the commissioner, Diane Aldridge; his office manager, Pam Scott; the former Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dick

Rendek; and a friend of Gary and Arlene, Elizabeth Cressman, is here as well. I'd ask all members to welcome them to the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I want also to bring greetings and welcome to Gary Dickson in his new role. For the information of members, Mr. Dickson practised law in Calgary for 23 years. He subsequently served as the MLA for Calgary-Buffalo for almost nine years, first elected in 1992 in a by-election. When Mr. Dickson decided not to contest the 2001 provincial election, he returned to practice but focussed exclusively on access to information and privacy matters.

Mr. Speaker, as I glanced through the summary of Mr. Dickson's privacy and access experience, it's crystal clear that he brings to this role a tremendous combination of experience, education, and skills ideally suited for the Information and Privacy Commissioner for Saskatchewan. So on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan and all members of this Legislative Assembly, I want to congratulate Gary Dickson on his appointment and wish him all the best in his new position.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of all of the members of the official opposition, I want to join with the Premier today in welcoming Mr. Dickson and his wife and the staff here to the legislature . . . to wish you much success and luck in the work that you're going to undertake of behalf of the people of this province.

It's always a balance that has to be struck between the need to protect the privacy of individuals and also a need to ensure that the information that is due the taxpayers is provided to the taxpayers in a timely way. So we look forward to the work that is going to be done.

We welcome you here to Saskatchewan as well, and through you, Mr. Speaker, congratulate Mr. Dickson on the appointment here today. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure and honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Hon. Assembly, a former minister . . . minister of the Crown of this province, the Hon. Gerald Muirhead. Mr. Muirhead is a constituent of mine. He was an MLA in this . . . a member of this Hon. Assembly from 1978 to 1995. He is a cattleman and a farmer in the Craik area, and I hope all members will extend a warm welcome to Mr. Muirhead.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Douglas

Park.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I just want to join with the member to welcome Mr. Muirhead to the Legislative Assembly. It was my pleasure to serve on the Public Accounts Committee for a period of time with Gerald, and it's a time I much appreciated and I appreciated his counsel. I might add that as a member of city council Mr. Muirhead authored a very significant study on water issues in southern Saskatchewan, and he's well remembered for that substantial work. And again I would ask members to bid him a warm welcome.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce another individual. I know she's not expecting this, but her name is Angie Merasty, and she works with me in the office. She's from Pelican Narrows, part of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. And I just want to have all my colleagues welcome her to Regina and to working in the legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Canada-Saskatchewan Sound Stage

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to share with this Assembly the good news that the Canada-Saskatchewan Sound Stage is fully booked for the next production season and set for another outstanding year.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Since the sound stage was officially opened in September 2002, there has been steady growth in the Saskatchewan film industry. Last year the film industry reached production volumes of \$47 million. It accounts for 650 full-time jobs and many of these jobs, Mr. Speaker, enable young people to pursue their dreams right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, as we have heard, one success story is that of the hit television series, *Corner Gas*. This Saskatchewan-made comedy series has announced it will begin filming its second season May 18.

Mr. Speaker, someone once said that the world could use a little more Saskatchewan. Congratulations to Brent Butt, Virginia Thompson, David Storey, and Rick Lewchuk for recognizing this to be true and then making it happen.

Mr. Speaker, the sound stage is attracting a steady stream of productions. From April to October the facility is being fully used. In the off-season the facility is still being well used for smaller and commercial productions. And, Mr. Speaker, administrative space in the sound stage is also filled to capacity with a waiting list.

Mr. Speaker, if some critics had it their way, the sound stage

would not be here today. I want to congratulate all of the people who are involved with *Corner Gas* and the sound stage and I wish them all good luck in the new season. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. April 18 is the memorial day for the Holocaust. It is so important that all people never forget what happened under the Nazi regime, where an attempt to exterminate a people resulted in 6 million deaths and untold atrocities violating human rights.

Last year I shared with this House my experience meeting Hayla, my maternal grandmother's cousin from Poland, and the tattooed number on her arm which she received while at a death camp.

This year all members were shocked to hear of the recent fire bombing of the United Talmud Torah School in Quebec. Terror once again was being used as a weapon against the Jewish people. I was angered beyond words at this cowardly act which has traumatized children in the country of Canada — my Canada. This can only be heeded as a wake-up call that hate, intolerance, and anti-Semitism still exists in the world and in our own country.

We therefore must not only remember the past but never tolerate making light of it, lest these atrocities be repeated.

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

New Pharmacy at Royal University Hospital

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, in December Medicine Shoppe Canada opened a new pharmacy at the Royal University Hospital located in the constituency I represent, Saskatoon Sutherland. I was honoured to attend their official opening on February 11.

This pharmacy is owned and operated by Jonathan and Margaret Kiesman. The Kiesmans are originally from Saskatchewan and were living in Lethbridge before they returned to their home province, where they saw a future in the pharmaceutical industry.

Since their return the Kiesmans have been providing valuable services and programs to the community. Mr. Speaker, this pharmacy not only meets the needs of the Royal University Hospital, but it also adds a new dimension to health services at the RUH. (Royal University Hospital). Among its services the pharmacy offers ongoing screening events and health and wellness programs.

Mr. Speaker, this is the fifth Medicine Shoppe in Saskatoon and the 86th one in Canada. Medicine Shoppe Canada has a 30-year history of establishing health focused pharmacies and continually wins recognition for its store design, customer

service, and patient care.

I ask all hon. members to join me in congratulating Medicine Shoppe Canada for reaching excellence in pharmaceutical services and acknowledging Jonathan and Margaret Kiesman's dedication and commitment to quality health care in Saskatchewan. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosthern-Shellbrook.

Treaty Commissioner Recognized by the United Nations

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all members of the Assembly are familiar with the dedicated efforts and tireless work of Judge David Arnot, Saskatchewan's Treaty Commissioner. Judge Arnot has informed and advised many stakeholder groups about the importance that treaties play, not only within the context of our province's history, but also within the context of our critical role as they play in our province's future.

Mr. Speaker, Judge Arnot's work has now received international acclaim with the recent release of the United States report on contemporary forms of racism. Judge Arnot was highlighted in the UN (United Nations) report as:

... a judge driven by great educational and social zeal, who takes due account of the rights of aboriginals and of their sensitivities.

So impressed was the UN reporter with the Office of the Treaty Commissioner's work that he included a section of the important roles treaties play, and singled out the Saskatchewan's program as a model, saying the education program:

... reaches beyond mere application of the law and seeks to achieve understanding between aboriginal and non-aboriginal peoples by teaching ... (them) the significance of treaties.

Teaching treaties in the classroom is one of the commissioner's initiatives in the UN report. The initiative trains teachers through the service training to gain confidence in talking about First Nations.

In other words, Mr. Speaker, Judge Arnot says we are on the mission here to create harmony and understanding in this province. May we all work together to achieve the important goal. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Saskatoon Mechanic Wins North American Title

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Dave Wiebe, a constituent of mine in Saskatoon Centre. Mr. Wiebe recently distinguished

himself in the ACDelco Technician of the Millennium competition.

Mr. Speaker, this is a three-part competition that begins with a written test to determine 10 finalists in eight regions in North America. Dave not only qualified to be one of the top finalists from Western Canada, but with a score of 99 per cent, also achieved the highest mark in Canada.

At the Western Canadian regional finals in Vancouver, each of the 10 finalists were given an identical car with five identical problems and were asked to diagnose and fix all the problems within a two-hour time limit. Mr. Speaker, Dave was the only competitor who was able to fix all five problems in the allotted time.

At the North American finals in Las Vegas, it was again identical cars with identical but more difficult problems. Again, Dave proved to be the only competitor who was able to determine and fix all the problems within two hours — something the organizers thought was impossible.

Now Dave is a graduate of Mount Royal Collegiate in Saskatoon and works at Crestview Auto Service, owned and operated by Don Klassen in downtown Saskatoon.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm sure all my colleagues will join with me in congratulating Dave Wiebe on his outstanding achievement of winning the ACDelco Technician of the Millennium III competition, and for continuing Saskatchewan's tradition of excellence.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

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

National Law Day

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, through you and to all members of the legislature, I would ask that all members recognize that today is Law Day. Law Day is a Canadian day which celebrates and commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in Canada. Law Day is now used as a vehicle for the public to learn about the legal profession and the legal institutions in Canada.

This is one of the fundamental cornerstones of our democracy, Mr. Speaker, and it's appropriate that it be recognized by all Canadians. Throughout Saskatchewan on today's date and the days leading up to today, court houses and lawyers made themselves available to explain and to give information regarding the legal profession, and they held a number of mock trials in schools throughout the province and held a series of luncheons to try and disseminate information.

We'd like to encourage the public to contact the Canadian Bar Association and the Law Society if they have questions about the legal profession or interested in becoming one.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Wascana Plains.

National Cancer Awareness Month

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, April is National Cancer Awareness Month. And here in Saskatchewan, the birthplace of the Canadian Cancer Society, it has been a springtime tradition since the 1940s for volunteers to canvass door-to-door to raise funds in support of the Cancer Society's valuable work.

The Cancer Society also raises funds through the sale of daffodils, the society's symbol of hope. The bright, cheerful blooms are sold every year to mark the beginning of Cancer Awareness Month.

Mr. Speaker, these initiatives allow the Canadian Cancer Society to fund research on all types of cancer, to offer comprehensive and credible information on treatment and risk reduction, and to provide support for people living with the disease and their families and friends, and to raise awareness of issues related to cancer.

Mr. Speaker, this is important work. Last year alone, some 4,500 Saskatchewan people were diagnosed with cancer. I thank the Saskatchewan branch of the Canadian Cancer Society, and in particular I thank the 12,000 volunteers across the province for working so hard to make a difference. I extend best wishes to everyone involved in a successful campaign.

Also I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the excellent work of the Saskatchewan Cancer Agency on its delivery of programs and services aimed at both prevention and treatment of cancer in Saskatchewan. Our thanks to them and all involved in a successful month for cancer research and awareness.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Waiting Times for Treatment of Cancer

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier today I introduced Mr. John Barnsley of the Assiniboia area to members of the Assembly.

John Barnsley, who is 52 years old, had one kidney removed in 1996 due to cancer. The cancer has recurred, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Barnsley now has a tumour about the size of a baseball where his kidney used to be. It has been three months since the tumour was found and his case has been deemed urgent but he has yet to see the specialist that will perform his surgery. In fact, he isn't even on a surgical wait list yet.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: will the minister tell Mr. Barnsley and his wife, Joan, today why a patient with an urgent cancer case is forced to wait over three months for treatment?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite well knows, these kinds of cases can be presented to my office very quickly, and we can deal with them there and deal with them in a, I think, discreet way. But he has raised a question here and I will clearly look into the particular situation.

But in our province we have very many professional people who deal with the people who are ill and their job is to make sure that treatment is obtained as quickly as possible.

So, Mr. Speaker, here in Saskatchewan we're continuing to work to use the resources. In this budget we have \$160 million more to go towards health care because we know that's a top priority of Saskatchewan people and we're going to continue to do everything we can to make sure that system works for everyone.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, many individuals in the province want to come forward in this way, not only to seek potential redress for their own situation but also to encourage others to do the same, to not necessarily trust the system but to take action.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this session the Health minister told the Assembly, and I'm quoting:

... our cancer treatment in Saskatchewan is something that we can all be proud of.

The optimum treatment time ... would ... be less than three weeks ...

The three months have now elapsed since the initial CT (computerized tomography) scan indicated a cancerous growth. Mr. Barnsley has not been given a date for surgery as of today. I'm not sure if that is something that anybody can be very proud of.

To the Minister of Health: how are the target times in the new Surgical Care Network helping people like John Barnsley who can't even get in to see a specialist for three months before he goes on the wait list?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I advised the member, I'll be looking at this particular case and making sure that the appropriate people know about the challenges that are there. And I invite him and all of his members to kindly bring these cases forward, as I know many members opposite do, not here in the Assembly.

But, Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate, we continue to work in the health system to provide the best care possible in our province. We've increased the amount of funding available for health. We've worked at setting up our optimum surgery times — first place in Canada that's setting out some very clear goals about what we're going to do. And we know that we won't always

meet those goals, and that's exactly the times that we need to have some of the questions raised.

So we will continue to ... (inaudible) ... and work with people, work with the professionals who deal with the patients and make sure that they've got the resources that they need.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the minister's saying. And we'll certainly look forward to seeing the commitment he has made here fulfilled, that he is going to investigate this case — the case of Mr. Barnsley — with his officials immediately.

And I wonder then if the minister will also stand in the legislature today and commit to this: that if the resources are not here, if they're not available in Saskatchewan for whatever reason, that the minister will make sure that John is referred out of province if necessary — out of province to get timely treatment to something, Mr. Speaker, that simply can't wait.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we have a policy in our government and working with our department that recognizes the professionals who work with patients to make sure that they get the appropriate treatment that is required. That treatment may happen in Saskatchewan, if we're able to provide it here.

If it's not available here, then we go to our neighbours in Manitoba or Alberta or BC (British Columbia) or we send them down to the States. But that's done with the professional advice of the medical people and other people within the health care system. We've done this for many, many years and we will continue to do that.

And I encourage everybody who has a challenge and has some concerns to make sure that they let their general practitioner know so that he can, or she can, assist them in dealing with the medical system. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Waiting Times for Magnetic Resonance Imaging

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well the minister seems to be pretty long on rhetoric but very short on solutions. And I don't really believe he's given the Barnsleys a true answer to the questions that were asked. So maybe the minister can answer a very basic question for me. What are the policies for out-of-province referral to obtain an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we've had a system in Saskatchewan for I think about 12 years now where we require prior approval for getting an MRI out of the province unless it's

a situation where somebody has gone to another province for a particular procedure, and in that procedure they require an MRI in that particular situation, or if one of our people happens to be in a car accident or something in British Columbia and they require an MRI. But we for many, many years have had a process of getting prior approval. The medical doctors know that and they provide the information to the other medical doctors who review the files, and then the prior approval is given in appropriate circumstances.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, last July Clara Hansen had not one but two specialists tell her that she needed an MRI for incapacitating back pain that forced her into a wheelchair and caused severe digestive problems. Mrs. Hansen was on morphine for pain and the pain kept her awake all hours of the night, yet she was told that she would have to wait up to three years to have an MRI done in Saskatchewan. And, Mr. Speaker, I repeat that — three years.

So her specialist requested an out-of-province MRI from Sask Health. The request was denied because, and I quote:

... the committee was not convinced that Ms. Hansen would be subjected to significant risk by waiting for her appointment in Saskatchewan.

To the Minister of Health: since an MRI is a diagnostic tool, how does Saskatchewan Health decide who can and who cannot wait?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I said previously, the decisions are made by medical professionals, medical doctors. They work with the people who make the requests, who are also medical doctors, and they have a procedure that they follow and they work with and it's one that we've used for many, many years.

But I would like to remind that member and all members of the House that in the budget this year we have included funds for a new MRI in Regina and also for funds to increase the use of the existing MRIs — the two in Saskatoon and the one in Regina — so that we can expand the capacity for the use of MRIs.

At the same time we are also making sure that we have an appropriate review of how MRIs are used to make sure that we're using our precious health dollars in the best way possible and we'll continue to do that using the things that we've learned as we've put forward our Saskatchewan surgical registry.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is obviously deflecting the question because the procedure didn't work for Clara Hansen. On the advice of her doctor, Mrs. Hansen went to Alberta anyway and paid for the MRI herself.

Clara had to lay in the back seat of the car while her husband drove her to Calgary, the pain was so bad. She had the MRI done and surgery followed shortly thereafter.

If Clara had not been able to afford the MRI in Calgary, she would still be waiting, in her wheelchair, possibly up to three years. It is clear that this NDP (New Democratic Party) government cannot provide timely health care services to Saskatchewan citizens.

On March 22 I wrote a letter to the minister asking that Mrs. Hansen be reimbursed for her MRI out of province and to this date I have not received an answer. Will the minister today commit to reimburse Mrs. Hansen the \$1,050 she was required to pay for her out-of-province MRI?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said in other instances when members have brought forward individual cases, I have a great deal of sympathy for the concerns that people have and some of the times the suffering that they go through. What I have to do though — in this case and in all other cases — is to make sure that the appropriate procedures are followed and used to make sure that our precious health dollars are used in the most appropriate way.

I know that the member opposite has sent a letter to me and this matter is being reviewed, and it will be responded to in due course.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Strike at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Premier. SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) students from across Saskatchewan have lost confidence in the Minister of Learning and apparently now so has the Premier.

Last night I turned on the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) news — after the hockey game, of course — and I found out that the member from Regina Dewdney is the new minister of Learning, or at least he's negotiating secret deals in his office that the Minister of Learning apparently knows nothing about. Mr. Speaker, I guess it shows how much confidence the Premier has in the Minister of Learning when he has the NDP Whip doing his job for him behind his back.

Mr. Speaker, since the minister doesn't know anything about this secret meeting, I'd like to ask the Premier: what was the purpose of this secret meeting; what was the Premier's deputy and the NDP Whip doing there; and is this an appropriate way to negotiate a collective agreement?

(14:15)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, all I can say is there is no secret like the secret that's on CBC.

The members opposite ask about discussions that went on between members on this side of the House with . . . or officials and with representatives from unions. I can assure them of this. SGEU represents many, many, many more employees than just the people at SIAST, and there are a number of other issues that are on the labour front. There are a number of issues that members on this side are involved in.

And all I can say is that I appreciate the fact that the member is tuned in to CBC. And he should just keep listening because some day in the very near future I am quite convinced there is going to be a negotiated settlement in that SIAST strike.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, students across Saskatchewan will be holding their breath for that answer, Mr. Speaker.

I know it wasn't a very well-kept secret because the minister seems to be the only one that didn't know about the meeting. Mr. Speaker, the Premier's deputy was at the meeting. Obviously he was there at the direction of the Premier. I think the Premier should answer the question.

Whatever the Premier was doing to resolve the dispute, he has failed miserably. No sooner did the Premier's office get involved than talks broke off again and it escalated back to a full-blown strike.

Mr. Speaker, now that the Premier has decided to become directly involved in these negotiations, will he tell us when SIAST students can expect to be back in the classroom?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I can tell the members of this Assembly that I anticipate within . . . if not later today, that tomorrow, both parties will be back at the negotiating table.

I want to also say this though, that it is very important, I believe, at this point, that when the SGEU members go back to the negotiating table, when they send their negotiating team there, that they take the pickets down. We cannot have a circumstance where there is a revolving door in the negotiating room. We need now to make sure that the negotiating is happening at the table, and we need to make sure that there is a resolve coming that does not further jeopardize the year that the students have put in. That is the direction of these talks. I don't think that the political antics of the members opposite are doing anything to help this matter, but it certainly does take some time up in question period.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, again what we hear from

the minister . . . We need a little less process and little more results.

The bottom line is, the bottom line is, another day of classes are cancelled at SIAST. Twelve thousand students are not in class. They're not writing final exams. And the minister says the collective bargaining process is working as it should. But it's not working, Mr. Speaker. It's not working for thousands of students across Saskatchewan who are being used as pawns in this dispute between the unions and this NDP government.

Mr. Speaker, the students have paid their tuition fees. They've attended their classes. Now it's time for this NDP government to live up to their end of the bargain and allow students to finish their education.

Mr. Speaker, now that the Premier has got directly involved through his Deputy, can he tell us when will students be back in class?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that the member opposite has raised. First of all he says that we are too focused on process — process that supposedly the members opposite believe in. It's called collective bargaining. There's a process to it. The two parties come together. They work through their discussion. They get a negotiated agreement. I don't know how he can say that there's too much process when we're asking for them to be involved in bargaining.

Second of all, let me say that it is my view, it is the view of this government, that parties would both be better served by having the instructors back in the classroom while they're at the negotiating table. We believe that that is the right approach. That is where the parties were last week, and it is now time for the two parties to go back to the table. We have called for them to do so. We have asked for them to do so. I believe that they are going to do so. And what we now need is to see SGEU (Saskatchewan Government Employees Union) take its instructors back into the classrooms as a show of good faith.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Well I'm glad to see, Mr. Speaker, that the minister is taking my advice from yesterday. One day late, but nevertheless here it is.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, the minister's plans aren't working. We've been hearing these hollow assurances for nearly a month. First the minister told everybody just wait for the budget; the budget will fix everything. The budget fixed everything all right, Mr. Speaker. It turned a rotating strike into a full-blown strike.

Then the Premier's office got involved, and now talks broke down entirely. Mr. Speaker, students are being used as pawns,

and their education is being jeopardized by a government that claims to care about students and claims to care about education. To the Premier, Mr. Speaker: how long will SIAST students be forced to wait?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, I certainly appreciate the member opposite coming forward with good advice. I frankly could tune in to CBC myself I guess to get that kind of advice that he's offering me to see what his position is.

Let me say this to the member opposite and to all members opposite. This strike situation will be resolved by getting a negotiated collective agreement. Either you believe in collective bargaining or you don't. We are not at the point today where back-to-work legislation is required.

If the members opposite want something other than collective bargaining, then they should stand on their feet. The member opposite should introduce back-to-work legislation which is what he was advocating yesterday and move forward with it. They have a number of members on that side quite capable of voting for it . . . and put that before the legislature. It is our view that this is better negotiated at the table where I understand both parties are headed back to.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Mr. Speaker, it is exactly arrogance like that that the students across Saskatchewan don't need. No wonder the negotiations are taking so long.

Mr. Speaker, every student that I've spoken to tells me that pushing back classes is not an option. Just look at the story of Crystal Kreklewich in today's paper. She has to complete her nursing classes in April so she can do her practicum in May and June because she's having a baby in August. Maybe the NDP can afford to wait, but it's students like Crystal Kreklewich that can't. If she doesn't go back to class right away, her education is gone, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to the Premier, if he cares about this issue: how will SIAST students be compensated for these delays in their education?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The objective, Mr. Speaker, is that students will complete their education; that is the objective here. If the members opposite have some other solution beyond what they suggested yesterday, which was back-to-work legislation, or what they suggest today, which is that they support collective bargaining, I'd be very interested to hear what that is because they are only two options here. The option is, as the member has suggested yesterday, which is back-to-work legislation, or the option is to provide for a negotiated settlement. Those are the options available.

This side has said that we want to see the negotiation move forward. I am told that SGEU has asked for a negotiating time at the table and that SIAST has agreed, and the two parties will go back to the table. That is where we're at. That is where we're at this hour. That is where things are moving forward. If the member opposite has a different solution, stand in the House and say it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Student Responses to the Strike at the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is also for the Minister of Learning.

I would like to read an e-mail from a constituent of mine. He's a computer technology student. He writes, "Students cannot and will not stand for extended school terms." He also goes on to say:

Many students, myself included, must pick up the tab for rent, living expenses, and transportation costs that they otherwise would not have.

My question to the minister is, how can they be expected to cover these additional costs? What will this government do to help these students who could be facing additional costs that many students cannot afford?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, several days ago I advised members of this Assembly that students who require additional financial assistance should be in contact with their funding agency, whether that is the student loans, or whether that is the provincial training allowance that they are working under. That is the approach for students who demonstrate financial need. And that is the situation that we're at.

If the members opposite continue to push on this, they continue to try and drive a wedge into this, it's not particularly helpful in terms of the bargaining process. This situation will be resolved when SIAST and the SGEU come to a collective agreement. And that is where we're at.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, here's another letter, and I quote:

I am a combined lab and x-ray technologist student at SIAST . . . And (I) have been out of school because of the strike for seven days now. I'm sure you are aware of all the problems with the lengthening of the school year . . . As well as the shortage of hospital technicians in

Saskatchewan. If this keeps up . . . I will have to move to Alberta to finish my schooling . . . And there is no way I would ever return to Saskatchewan after making a move like that.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: cut the arrogance, answer the question. Is this what the NDP wants — to drive even more of our young people from this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — The members opposite are pursuing a line of questioning which is completely unhelpful to this situation, and I think it demonstrates their desire to politicize this for partisan benefit. I would note to anybody who thinks that, it's not so. The comments by the member for Saltcoats who, in the local newspaper there, commented that he was going to take great pleasure in watching this government deal with the public sector unions . . . and he was going to, and I quote, "enjoy every minute of it."

Well I hope the member opposite is enjoying every minute of it, and I hope that he tells his colleagues that this is about something much more important than petty partisan politics demonstrated by the new Leader of the Opposition of the old Saskatchewan Party.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And it would be nice if we had an Education minister that would just do his job. Mr. Speaker, I have a letter from a concerned parent in Lanigan, and she writes:

Our daughter is finishing her second year of nursing, and I feel these students are being held hostage. She has a summer job waiting for her in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Humboldt in July and August. If they can't finish their year on time, what will happen to their summer jobs?

Mr. Speaker, she also goes on to write that they are a farm family who are waiting for their final 2002 CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program) payment which the NDP is refusing to contribute to. On top of all that, Mr. Speaker, they have to fly to Victoria later this month to get medical treatment for another daughter because they can't get treatment in this province. And the NDP government won't pay for their out-of-province medical expenses.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP are wrecking education. They're wrecking agriculture. They're wrecking health care, and this one family is paying the price for all of that. Why?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, I can say to the member opposite that I would very much appreciate being able to

respond to that particular constituent directly. And I would ask her to provide me with the name and address so that I may do so.

I can tell the member opposite what I will tell that particular family, which is that this government has made as a priority in this budget . . . health care, education, and agriculture. And those are where we have put our funding priorities.

Now the members opposite have argued against it saying, they have argued against this saying that they are not prepared to support this budget. They have voted against the budget. They have voted against the new money for health care. They have voted against the new MRI. They have voted against education funding. They have voted against the agriculture funding. And yet they stand up in this House to play politics.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Ile-a-la-Crosse Joint Use Facility

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Northern Affairs and the Minister of Learning to provide an important update to the members of the Legislative Assembly on the progress of a very exciting and unique project in the North. The Keewatin Yatthé Regional Health Authority is proceeding with planning for a joint use facility in Ile-a-la-Crosse. The efforts of the regional health authority and the Ile-a-la-Crosse school district and other partners in the community will result in the construction of a combined health centre and high school in the community of Ile-a-la-Crosse.

The project is the first of its kind in Canada and is unique because it is a multi-use facility that will combine both a health care facility and a high school into one building.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of the fact that no other community in the country has such a project. This concept is another Saskatchewan first. And, Mr. Speaker, it is another example of how we in Saskatchewan are leaders at finding innovative ways to address the challenges faced in sustaining the delivery of both high quality health care and educational services when we clearly recognize there are special community needs that we must address, but within the resources that we have available.

(14:30)

Mr. Speaker, we can achieve greater efficiencies and generate cost savings both in the construction phase and then in the ongoing operation of the new facility by combining health care services and high school programming into one building. But, Mr. Speaker, this project is about more than innovation. It demonstrates community spirit and — above all else — co-operation. And that, Mr. Speaker, represents more than just cost savings. It is how we work together in Saskatchewan to

create solutions.

I'm pleased today, Mr. Speaker, to announce that the functional plan of this project is now complete, and the next stages of this project can proceed.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Ile-a-la-Crosse should be congratulated for their innovation and determination in working through the challenges of planning such a complex facility. Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Saskatchewan residents, I want to congratulate the Keewatin Yatthé Regional Health Authority, the Ile-a-la-Crosse school district, the community leaders, and the people of Ile-a-la-Crosse and surrounding communities for their commitment to this wonderful project. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to the Minister of Health for his copy of the remarks.

I rise today also to congratulate the people of Ile-a-la-Crosse, not only in what they have accomplished but in what they will achieve: a school and a hospital under one roof, a great success story. We wish them a tremendous congratulations. We hope that it is . . . our government will see to it that this great venture will be adequately staffed that it may reach its full potential.

I believe it is very important to make these connections with the North. This is just a small step on the road to a stronger Saskatchewan for all of its people.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

Bill No. 23 — The Regional Parks Amendment Act, 2004

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

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 23, The Regional Parks Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of the Environment that Bill No. 23, The Regional Parks Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Forbes: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 24 — The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 24, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 24, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

**Bill No. 25 — The Adoption Amendment Act, 2004/
Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'adoption**

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Community Resources.

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 25, The Adoption Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister for Community Resources and Employment that Bill No. 25, The Adoption Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 26 — The Adoption Consequential Amendment Act, 2004

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

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 26, The Adoption Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Community Resources and Employment that Bill No. 26, The Adoption Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — When shall the Bill be read a second time?

Hon. Ms. Crofford: — Next sitting of the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table a written response to question no. 166.

The Speaker: — Response to 166 has been submitted.

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Appointment of the Information and Privacy Commissioner

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, at the conclusion of my remarks I would like to move a motion with respect to the appointment of Mr. R. Gary Dickson, Q.C., (Queen's Counsel) as the Information and Privacy Commissioner for the province of Saskatchewan.

If I might, just by way of background about Mr. Dickson, he received his law degree from the University of Alberta. He was appointed Alberta's Queen's Counsel in 1994. He practiced law in Calgary for 23 years.

He was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Alberta constituency of Calgary Buffalo in 1992 and re-elected in 1993 and 1997. He served for nine years as a

member of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices that oversees the Information and Privacy Commissioner in Alberta. He served on the Premier's Panel on Access to Information and Protection of Privacy that conducted public hearings in 1993, which led to the development of Alberta's freedom of information and privacy legislation.

Mr. Dickson was a member of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Select Special Committee in 1998-1999 that undertook a review of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. As a member of Alberta Health minister's information task force, he participated in an eight-month study and consultation on health information issues.

Mr. Dickson did not seek re-election in 2001 and resumed the practice of law, focusing exclusively on access to information and privacy law. He is a member of the Canadian Bar Association National Privacy Law Section executive. Mr. Dickson recently chaired the Legal Education Society workshops in Edmonton and Calgary on Bill 44, Personal Information Protection Act (Alberta).

He is the human rights columnist for *LawNow*, and a columnist for the *Calgary Herald*. He authored the section on health information for the *Privacy Handbook for Canadians: Your Rights and Remedies*, Alberta's Civil Research Centre, 2003, and he is a frequent speaker and commentator on access to information and privacy issues.

In February 2003, Mr. Speaker, the Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Dick Rendek, made a recommendation to the Board of Internal Economy for the Legislative Assembly that a new full-time commissioner be appointed and that a stand-alone office be established. The board approved this recommendation and appointed a selection panel that included government and official opposition representatives. The selection committee held an open national competition before recommending the successful candidate to the board.

In November 2003, Mr. Speaker announced that Mr. Robert Gary Dickson, QC. was appointed by order in council on recommendation of the Board of Internal Economy as the Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner. Mr. Dickson was unanimously recommended by the board and is well qualified for the position. As Acting Information and Privacy Commissioner, Mr. Dickson has performed admirably.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act came into effect in Saskatchewan in 1992 and was followed by the local authority Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act in 1994. These Acts set out a framework for the receipt and subsequent handling by provincial and certain local government agencies of personal information.

The Information and Privacy Commissioner plays a central, adjudicative, advisory, and educational role under these Acts.

Mr. Speaker, we are fortunate to have Mr. Dickson's skills and abilities and experience at work on behalf of the people of Saskatchewan and we want to congratulate him on his appointment.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would now move:

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor:

Recommending that the Lieutenant Governor in Council appoint R. Gary Dickson, Q.C., of the city of Regina, in the province of Saskatchewan as the Information and Privacy Commissioner pursuant to section 38 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

I move, seconded by the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

That an humble address be presented to Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor:

Recommending that the Lieutenant Governor in Council appoint R. Gary Dickson, Q.C., of the city of Regina, in the province of Saskatchewan as the Information and Privacy Commissioner pursuant to section 38 of The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the official opposition, we'd like to recognize and welcome Mr. Dickson.

I understand that in his earlier days Mr. Dickson was a Liberal MLA in Alberta. And given the current number of Liberals in this House we presume that this will only add to Mr. Dickson's impartiality. And we look forward to working with him and I'm sure all members will work with him in a positive and productive manner.

I note from Mr. Dickson's qualifications and his past dealings in Saskatchewan, he's eminently well-qualified for this position and I'm looking forward to him being a more regular citizen and attendee in this House.

The Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is a significant enhancement of the rights of Saskatchewan citizens. It provides a valuable methodology for obtaining information and for protecting the privacy and confidentiality of citizens' rights in this province.

We look forward to Mr. Dickson playing a significant role in developing public knowledge of this piece of legislation. And I'm sure that all MLAs will work with Mr. Dickson to disseminate information and assist in public awareness.

We look forward to developing a positive working relationship with the commissioner. And on a personal basis, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome Mr. Dickson to Saskatchewan on a full-time basis and reversing the out-migration to Alberta.

I'm sure that Mr. Dickson is going to find the citizens of

Saskatchewan will make him warm and comfortable and that this will become a permanent home for him. And we look forward to him returning to Alberta to bring colleagues back with him. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — On the motion moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park and seconded by the member for Saskatoon Southeast, with respect to the appointment of R. Gary Dickson as the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act Commissioner, is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

I recognize the Government House Leader.

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

That the House recess from 2:43 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. to allow the attendance of members at a reception in honour of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I move, seconded by the member for Melfort.

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

That the House recess today from 2:43 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. to allow the attendance of members at a reception in honour of the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until the call of the bell which will be five minutes before 3:15. Pardon me. I stand corrected. This House stands recessed until about 3:10.

The Assembly recessed for a period of time.

The Speaker: — Order. Being the hour of 3:15, the session will resume.

(15:15)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 7 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel, STC (Saskatchewan Transportation Company), and SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance), and Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to be able to rise today to move second reading of The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004.

The Automobile Accident Insurance Act governs the Auto Fund, the universal mandatory automobile insurance program administered by SGI. The primary purpose of the Auto Fund is to provide basic auto insurance coverage for Saskatchewan drivers at affordable rates. The proposed amendments, Mr. Speaker, to the Act will ensure that rates stay affordable while continuing to make coverage as fair as possible for all Saskatchewan motorists.

Effective January 1, 2003, Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan became the first jurisdiction in North America to offer a choice between a tort and a no-fault insurance product. This was a unique, made-in-Saskatchewan solution that is working for the people of our province.

The government's goal . . . government goals were to provide, through our publicly administered Auto Fund, two quality injury insurance products for all Saskatchewan residents to choose from. Mr. Speaker, we have met that goal. SGI has been providing these two products for more than a year and today we are proposing a series of amendments which strengthen and clarify a language to support current practices.

I'd like to begin by outlining the proposed amendments to the tort injury insurance product. Mr. Speaker, tort coverage offers a basic package of benefits regardless of the circumstances of the accident. Included in this basic package of benefits are provisions for dependents of motorists killed in collisions. The proposed amendment will enhance the definition of dependent under the tort injury program. The current definition is more restrictive under tort. With this amendment the definition of dependents will now include all dependent adults and children under 21, regardless of dependency like the no-fault coverage does. Mr. Speaker, this will ensure all dependents are adequately covered by tort in the event that their parent or caregiver is killed in a collision.

I'd now like to review proposed changes that will further strengthen the tort legislation. Proposed amendments will deny benefits to the family or spouse of an insured who commits suicide or attempts to commit suicide using a motor vehicle. This is consistent, Mr. Speaker, with the no-fault product and other disability insurance coverages.

The final changes to the tort program we're proposing will prevent the possibility of double recovery. It will ensure that if an individual receives benefits for permanent impairment either under tort or no-fault, any court-awarded compensation for non-economic loss will now be reduced by the amount of the benefits already provided by the basic coverage.

I'd now like to turn to the group of proposed amendments that deal with the no-fault injury program. Mr. Speaker, no-fault coverage offers a comprehensive package of benefits regardless of the circumstances of an accident. The following proposed changes will ensure these benefits continue to be adequate and fair. Currently the insurance coverage is provided as a top-up to individuals with a spouse or dependants who receive benefits under another statutory program such as workers'

compensation.

This top-up is provided when the benefits are less than what they would receive under no-fault. The proposed amendment will now include single individuals. This change will ensure all motorists have access to the same top-up regardless of their marital status or family situation.

The next amendment to no-fault coverage deals with the Appeal Commission. The Appeal Commission is an independent body that hears the appeals of SGI claimants, and whose rulings are binding to SGI and to that claimant.

Mr. Speaker, it has been noted that some claimants who pursue appeals through the Appeal Commission eventually lose interest in the process. This may happen for a number of reasons, but as a result some appeals are not proceeding. It is proposed that provisions allow an appeal that is before the Appeal Commission to be dismissed after six months if the appeal is not pursued.

The final two proposed amendments to no-fault injury coverage I'm outlining today are clarifications to existing legislation. The first will ensure an individual with no-fault coverage who is entitled to sue for non-economic losses is not subject to a \$5,000 deductible.

The second will clarify by . . . how SGI I should say, calculates an income replacement benefit under no-fault in cases where an insured suffers a relapse in their medical condition after the first 180 days since their accident.

I'd now like to turn to the proposed changes that deal with another successful program, namely the Safe Driver Recognition program. Mr. Speaker, the most significant change we are proposing for the Safe Driver Recognition program will ensure the government continues to be tough on impaired drivers. Drinking and driving is a top priority for SGI.

Statistics show that drinking and driving continues to be the number one contributing factor to traffic fatalities on Saskatchewan's roads. SGI commits many of its resources to working with the public and law enforcement to raise awareness of this issue. Legislation changes are also important to the efforts . . . in the efforts to prevent drinking and driving, and every piece of legislation counts.

Currently the Safe Driver Recognition program issues demerit points for infractions related to drinking and driving. However, individuals who drink and then drive and consequently receive a roadside licence suspension currently do not receive demerit points for these suspensions.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed amendments will address this omission by adding demerit points to the Safe Driver Recognition program for experienced and new drivers who receive 24-hour roadside licence suspensions as a result of drinking and driving. If these demerit points result in a driver moving into the penalty zone on the Safe Driver Recognition scale, the driver will also now be subject to a surcharge under that program. This will serve as financial deterrent for drinking and driving and also impact the driver's likelihood of a discount on his or her motor vehicle premium.

Mr. Speaker, we also propose an amendment to deal with appeals on all surcharges under Safe Driver Recognition and business recognition programs. Motorists who receive surcharges under either of these programs have the right to appeal. Appeals are referred to the Highway Traffic Board, which is independent of SGI. The proposed amendment means guidelines for these appeals can be developed for the Highway Traffic Board to ensure appeals are dealt with quickly and effectively.

Another amendment that will help streamline processes will also make improvements to the accident reporting system in Saskatchewan. In 2002 a change was made so not all collisions need to be reported to the police, Mr. Speaker. Now only collisions involving bodily injury, death, hit and run, an impaired operator, or where vehicles have to be towed need to be reported to police. All other accidents are reported to SGI through its dial-a-claim service.

Mr. Speaker, this amendment will add one more type of collision to the list that still needs to be reported to police. All accidents involving out-of-province vehicles will need to be reported to police. SGI's dial-a-claim service cannot process out-of-province vehicles. The proposed amendment will correct the omission in this legislation.

The next group of proposed amendments also corrects some omissions and loopholes in the Act. The first in this group updates the statutory condition that denies coverage to a driver who is not qualified and authorized to drive. The terminology will now be less restrictive. The result will be that individuals who forget to renew their license won't be without insurance coverage. However, coverage will be denied for a suspended driver, as will coverage for a driver who does not renew their registration because he or she owed SGI money.

Mr. Speaker, we all know how dangerous it can be when motorists drive at high speeds, not only for the driver but also for the public. It is important for those who drive at dangerously high speeds to face serious penalties that include being denied insurance coverage in the event of an accident. Proposed amendments will deny property damage insurance coverage if a vehicle is being used in an off-road speed, skill, or endurance test.

The last proposed amendment addresses legislation concerning property damage against Crown corporations, municipalities, and government buildings who do not contribute to the Auto Fund. Under this amendment, claims made by these organizations for damage caused by a hit-and-run or uninsured motorist will be denied. Since these incidents are frequent, costly, and usually reported long after the damage has occurred, the . . . (inaudible) . . . Auto Fund, I should say, and in turn Saskatchewan motorists, should not have to bear the cost of these claims.

That concludes my outline of proposed amendments found in The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004. These amendments work to make our compulsory insurance more fair, more efficient, and more socially responsible. And, Mr. Speaker, these changes will keep auto rates affordable and ensure fairness for all Saskatchewan motorists.

Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move second reading of An Act to amend The Automobile Insurance Act.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for SGI that Bill No. 7, The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is quite a substantial Act that's before us at this particular time. And I think there is a need to go ahead and discuss this at some length, Mr. Speaker, just because there's so much that's involved in this particular situation.

Mr. Speaker, there are many times when a government enacts a piece of legislation or the work that government does, that people . . . parts of . . . members of society object to what's going on. Those objections are usually fairly short-lived and fairly quiet. Now, Mr. Speaker, when we get to SGI, we find out that the opposite is true. And I think that indicates to us that there is a very serious problem with SGI.

Mr. Speaker, over the last numbers of years we've had a group that has done a lot of work in this particular province known as Victims of No Fault. Now why in the world would we have a group, an organization, known as Victims of No Fault? Have they nothing better to do? Yes, they do. This is a group, Mr. Speaker, that is very concerned about the shortcomings under the SGI program.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, some two, three years ago, Victims of No Fault organized meetings all around this province and had people come in, giving their stories as to how SGI had served them very poorly . . . in many cases, not at all.

I attended almost all of those meetings, Mr. Speaker. And it was actually sad to hear some of the stories that were out there, where SGI had just refused to go ahead and help people, where they had refused to meet some needs, where basically they just turned people out on the streets. Sounds a little rough, Mr. Speaker . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, but that's exactly what happened. Individuals who needed care, who needed specialized medical care, weren't given that care. And in many cases when their situation was analyzed, they were treated with an extreme lack of respect.

And I think it is that combination of things, first of all, that there seemed to be part of the system that didn't meet the needs of the public and then, that those individuals were treated with such an unbelievable lack of respect basically has meant that Victims of No Fault is still around.

Now we've had a change in SGI over last numbers of years. And they have included the tort system, and we'll say a little more about that in a little while, Mr. Speaker.

But I think it's absolutely shameful that when you had that much of an emphasis put on the shortcomings of SGI, and that there were programs put out and solutions presented — and I think that the premier solution was one of them, where they

could have done something with SGI as it was set up as a no-fault situation and work through with the premiums and work through with the benefits — that would have alleviated the shortcomings that SGI had in its automobile insurance setup.

However SGI chose totally to ignore that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, totally ignore that. And instead they set up what I think is a bit of a phony program. They said, well sure, we'll give you the option; you can go sue; it's called the tort system. So we've got this new innovative thing in Saskatchewan where you can either sign up under no-fault or you can go into the tort system.

Well that's supposed to give us the best of both worlds and we can choose. Well it's not quite that easy, Mr. Speaker. Because if you've ever gone to your insurance broker, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you've said okay, you handle all manner of insurances, and now I want to talk to you about automobile insurance, and I have the option now to sign up under no-fault or under the tort system. Where exactly are we at with this? What would be advisable? What are the benefits on one side or the other? You will find a total lack of information that is easy to understand and that makes sense to the average person.

(15:30)

Maybe if you're a lawyer, you might have some hope. Fortunately we don't have an excess of lawyers in this province, so most of us have to do without, and we don't mind. But things should be out there in a form that any individual can walk off the street and say they want to insure their car, and make a choice between the no-fault and the tort system and know exactly what they're getting into; what the benefits are going to be, and what the risks are. And every program has some risks that are out there.

But you can't get that. Sure there's a little pamphlet that goes around and you're told, well read this. I've read it, and if we're doing polling around the legislature over here, I'm sure everyone here has probably browsed through it. But do they really remember anything that was in there that made them choose one or the other?

Now we know the hidebound socialists are going to say, well we're going with no-fault just because that's what Tommy would have wanted. But for the rest of the people in this province who are thinking and making choices, they're going to want to know, well are there benefits on one side or the other for the situation I find myself in.

You can't find that, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's not there. It's written in so much legalese and avoidance of the issue, that basically you go to that and you say, well I don't know. If I've had a bad taste with no-fault in the past, or a friend or relative's had a bad taste with no-fault, I guess I'll steer away from that and go for the tort system — not really knowing what you're getting into and what the upsides and the downsides are going to be.

And I said earlier on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I think this is a sham. Because I think what this NDP government is doing with that whole concept is it's thrown in the tort system, created such a convoluted idea out there that people are just going to avoid it

because they can't understand it. And then after a period of some 3, 4, 5 years, they're going to say, see, nobody signed up for tort. That's because they created a situation, Mr. Speaker, on purpose, that would force people to avoid the tort system just because there wasn't enough information out there. And then they could come back and say, guess what, our no-fault system is such an ideal situation that nobody in Saskatchewan wants anything else. And it may be the furthest thing from the truth and probably is.

Mr. Speaker, looking at Bill No. 7 in some detail, there's a few situations that we're going to have to discuss in a lot of detail. The minister in his statement listed a number of things for which insurance wasn't going to cover, wasn't going to cover.

And he started off with saying, well you can't . . . it doesn't work when you test drive. Oh, now does that mean when I go and I test drive a car — and, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you might be selling your car, you have an ad in your local paper, I come drive your car, I'm doing a test drive — does that mean that I'm suddenly not covered? That's exactly what the minister said.

Then he made a statement about speed. Does that mean that if we're going from here to Saskatoon at 115 kilometres that we're not covered? Those specifics aren't in there.

It gets very scary, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we get into a vehicle and we don't know under what situations we have what kind of coverage. This particular Bill, Bill No. 7, opens up so many doors that have vague answers behind them. And we're going to have to do a lot of work on this, and I'm very suspicious of where this government's going.

So they talked about the speed thing. They talked about the test thing. I believe there's a thing in there about racing. Well I guess if you can prove that, that's fine. Who's going to decide if you were racing? You know, what constitutes that? Do you have to have a declared statement from both drivers? You're not likely going to get it.

One of the scariest ones out of the list that he gave, when he said that you were not going to be covered under off-road conditions, under off-road conditions. Mr. Speaker, let's just walk down that path a little ways and see the disaster situation that could lead us into.

A farmer has a semi-trailer in his field for harvest time. It catches fire. I imagine he's not covered, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because he's off-road. That's exactly what the minister said. That's exactly what the Bill says — he's off-road, he's not covered.

Somebody else is out there duck hunting and he has his vehicle 300 feet off the road, leaves it there, goes walking to do his hunting. The vehicle is damaged, catches fire. Any one of a dozen things could happen to it. He's not covered.

This has some disastrous things that are out there, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And I'm worried again that this NDP government is putting through a piece of legislation where they have absolutely no idea of the implications of it.

Off-road — very few people in this province, particularly rural

and I would say just about everybody in the rural situation, uses all of their vehicles in an off-road situation on a very regular basis. Even the person bringing out lunch at harvest time or seeding time takes the family car with a lunch in the trunk and brings it out to the people working out there. Off-road . . .

An Hon. Member: — You can't even drive on the beach.

Mr. Heppner: — You can't even drive on the beach. Now that really creates some unique situations. If in fact we end up with enough water in some of the lakes around here and the parks are open, if they ever will open up, and you take your vehicle down to the beach and it's sitting on the beach and the tide . . . We don't have tides in Saskatchewan. But anything else happens with that vehicle, there's no coverage.

And so, Mr. Speaker, those kinds of things are here at first blush. How many problems are there in this piece of legislation, if we continue going through it, and go through the thing in detail, and go through it very carefully?

If we turn to page 16 in the Act, Mr. Speaker, I believe there was something . . . or was it in the . . . I believe it was in the notes from the minister. Okay. And that has the part about the off-roads. It has the part about the speeds. It has a part about the racing. It has all those things in there. But, Mr. Speaker, as I said, no definitions of anything. These things are wide open and we have no idea where government is going to go with these sorts of things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we look at another particular comment that was made by the minister, and he says and I quote:

Proposed amendments will deny benefits to the family or spouse of an insured who commits suicide or attempts to commit suicide using a motor vehicle.

Now it says that's consistent with no-fault. Okay. Serious concerns in this. So someone has his family in his vehicle and uses it unfortunately to commit suicide — and we have a few of those every year in Saskatchewan — is his family not covered in that accident? According to what the minister stated, the answer is no. Proposed amendments will deny benefits to the family or spouse of an insured. It says nothing about whether in or out of the vehicle, whether at home, whether along with him.

This Bill I'm afraid is just full of errors and poorly thought out ideas that are in there, and we're going to have to look through that in a whole lot of detail.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to give you an example of what SGI has just done very recently. And I think that indicates why we have so little faith in how they're going to deal with people. And I talk part about of dealing them with respect.

We had a Saskatchewan individual who's working in the States. And he's only there on a temporary basis; he has a Saskatchewan licence plate, Saskatchewan insurance. He's stopped by the United States Highway Patrol and they're checking whether his insurance is valid or not. And so he checks with Saskatchewan and they say, well yes you would be covered if you could get a letter from that state government saying that it's okay for you to work in that state, using your

Saskatchewan vehicle and your Saskatchewan insurance. But SGI told the person you'll never get it because no state would ever send that sort of a letter.

Well you don't get an answer yes or no until you ask. The individual went to that state government and said, I'm working here; here's my situation. Can I have a letter saying that you say it's okay for me to use my vehicle in your state for this particular part of this job, so I can send that letter back to SGI so that I'm covered? Well sure, why wouldn't we do that?

So the state wrote the letter, the individual sent it back to SGI. SGI said, h'm, that's interesting, but we still don't know if we're going to cover you or not. So they got exactly what they asked in proof and in reference, but they still said, we don't know. So the individual's left out there not sure if SGI's covering him or not.

That's what I meant earlier on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when I said they're not treating people with respect. When you ask an individual and you tell him, you get a letter from that state government and you bring it to us and if that letter says it's okay for you to use that vehicle in that state, we will cover you — we will cover you. Then when the letter comes through, SGI doesn't do it.

And I see one of the members from Saskatoon has got a look of consternation all about her face. But then we've seen that look there before.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that's what I'm relating to when I'm saying that we have to go through Bill No. 7 very, very carefully because we're never sure exactly what SGI is going to do to the people of this particular province.

There's also a statement made that currently insurance coverage is provided as a top-up to individuals where the spouse or dependants who receive benefits under another statutory program such as workers' compensation. That's probably a good part to that program, Mr. Speaker. And I think if it is actually what it seems to be, we would be in support of that.

Here's another one, Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned in his introduction of Bill No. 7. He said the first will insure an individual with no-fault coverage who is entitled to sue for non-economic losses not subject to a \$5,000 deductible. This is one area, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where SGI over time has an abysmal record and that is dealing with business people.

When business people get hurt in a situation and they can no longer carry on their business, SGI by and large says, well sell it off, because under SGI and the socialists if you're in business, you're making way too much money anyways. It's what they think, and so that's how they treat the people that are hurt under accident situations.

This one's interesting, Mr. Speaker. This one's interesting — and they're chirping from someplace down around Moose Jaw right now — that up till this point, up till this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, up to this point, there was a \$5,000 deductible on economic loss. Now why a \$5,000 deductible? You definitely, you insure to get the cost.

And again I'm getting that look of consternation. I would ask the members from the government side to get the minister's speech, and it's on page 9. It's on page 9. There's three paragraphs on that. It's the middle one; so it's the second one whether you count from the top down or the bottom up.

Why in the world there would be a \$5,000 deductible? Surely when you're hurt in an accident, you don't have to tell a person, well here's your economic loss, but we're just going to cut back, claw back \$5,000. Why? I wouldn't have any idea, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why. SGI apparently doesn't have any either.

So finally some guilt must have . . . they've become somewhat guilt ridden, and they've decided to change that particular clause.

Mr. Speaker, as I've just shown, there are a lot of areas in Bill No. 7 that we have a lot of trouble with. We haven't even discussed the part about the rates and the low coverage. People between the ages of 25 to 55, 60, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have overpaid on SGI for all of that time period because SGI has had no opportunity for that group which has had the best record. So for decades, that group has paid a whole lot more than they should.

(15:45)

I gave the example of the need to sort of streamline people working out of province, students being out of province. We discussed how the tort situation is basically set up to fail so that the NDP can say, well I guess what we're going to do is we're going to have to stay with no-fault because no one wants it. They've made sure no one understands it. And then the other situations that are brought to the attention of the House today.

So in view of that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'm going to move that we adjourn debate on Bill No. 7 at this time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Martensville has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 8 — The Gas Inspection Amendment Act, 2004

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the SaskPower Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today I rise in this House to move second reading of the gas inspections Act, 1993. This critical piece of public safety legislation has been amended a number of times over the years. The time has come however for this law and this regulation to be updated and modernized in order to maintain public safety.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments are being introduced as part of SaskPower's legal responsibility to conduct all gas inspections

in Saskatchewan. The gas inspections Act, 1993 protects consumers from potential hazards created during the installation, operation of propane and natural gas systems and equipment in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation sets out the legal powers and obligations that informs the work of Saskatchewan's 21 gas inspectors as well as Saskatchewan's more than 1,000 licensed gas contractors.

Each year SaskPower gas and electrical inspectors issue more than 34,000 permits as part of their efforts to support the safe use and operation of gas equipment among customers, licensed gas inspectors . . . licensed gas contractors, excuse me, and suppliers, an effort that also includes inspections and safety education.

Mr. Speaker, approval of the proposed amendments to the gas inspections Act, 1993 will only serve to bolster the already substantial efforts being undertaken each and every day to ensure public safety related to the use of natural gas and propane in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me provide the members of this Assembly with the highlights of the proposed amendments. First of all, the amendments include legal clarification that all Saskatchewan gas inspectors will be required to carry and display inspector identification cards.

Secondly, the proposed amendments include an increase from one to two years from when the chief gas inspector is first made aware of an offence under the Act and the time during which prosecutions can be launched for alleged offences under the Act.

The amendments will also provide legal authority for the chief gas inspector to issue public safety bulletins to identify public safety hazards in a timely manner.

Another important amendment includes a general prohibition against acts of obstruction against inspectors during the performance of their duties under the gas inspections Act, 1993.

There will be an increase in the maximum fines for offences under the Act from the current \$1,000 to \$10,000, with the ultimate penalty amount remaining in the court's discretion.

Provision for directors' liability for offences of corporations is part of the amendments package, as is provision for vicarious liability of employers for the offences of their employees.

The amendments include revision and strengthening of the process for administrative penalties if and when contractors fail to obtain required permits.

The amendments also include a requirement that all appeals of gas inspectors' decisions be made in writing.

And finally, the amendments address the need to add hydrogen gas to the gas inspections Act, 1993 to ensure that this emerging energy source is handled in a safe manner.

Mr. Speaker, let me point out to all members of this Assembly

that the amendments being given second reading today also fulfill a commitment by our government in the Throne Speech to improve the safety and security of our neighbourhoods. By undertaking prudent and timely amendments to this legislation for Crowns like SaskPower, we are responding to a commitment to maintain public safety and contribute to a better quality of life for Saskatchewan families and businesses now and for the next generation.

To conclude my remarks in respect to amendments to the gas inspections Act, 1993, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I'd like to say that the members of this side of the House are in full support of these important changes to this legislation, knowing that they will help ensure that the public continues to be protected to the highest standards possible.

Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister, that Bill No. 8, The Gas Inspection Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An Act to amend The Gas Inspection Act, 1993, Bill No. 8. While I listened to the minister's comments very closely, there's a number of things I'd like to comment on, and he seems to portray that most of these amendments to the Act is concerning public safety. And we certainly are in favour of doing what we can to ensure that the public is as safe as possible with various gases and in . . . that fuel our homes and warm our homes and run our businesses. And it's very important that we take all the precautions possible.

And the minister also, in the Bill, talks quite a bit about gas inspectors and permits. Just on those items, as we must keep in mind when we're bringing in new regulation and rules, that we keep in mind the ultimate goal in this province is, number one, public safety. But also very close to that is the growth of our economy, what the private sector . . . how the private sector will work with the new rules and regulations that the government is bringing in.

Now certainly that's the place of government to deal with the rules around public safety and . . . but it is also the purpose of the government to make rules and regulations that are practical for the businesses that must operate with these various gases that are out in our economy and also our individual homes and apartments that are heated by natural gas. As it said, there are 34,000 permits issued, so that's a considerable number.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in this Bill we talked . . . the minister talks about the inspectors having inspector identification cards. Well that's important as well that people and businesses in the province know who's coming in and that they're proper officials to do the inspection.

Also goes on to talk about the length that litigation can take place after a chief gas inspector is first made aware of an

offence — that's gone from one year to two years. And again that may be an issue that we'd like to speak to all the stakeholders about. It seems that there can't be unlimited liability. And liability is a big concern. First we want to make sure that the public is safe, but also on the other hand we want to make it fair to the businesses that are operating in these areas.

And, Mr. Speaker, they talk about the chief gas inspector to issue public safety bulletins. Well that's common sense that those types of things are made available to the public concerning problems in those areas.

The Bill also goes on to talk about increasing the offence under the Act from the current 1,000 to \$10,000 and the remaining . . . (inaudible) . . . of the penalty remaining in the court's discretion.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also adds hydrogen gas to the list of existing gas, what the definition of gas. And right now it means, a definition of gas means natural gas, manufactured gas, methane gas, butane gas, or propane in the liquid or the vapour state. And of course with hydrogen coming on and the hydrogen cell being developed, hydrogen gas certainly would make sense to be included in this area.

I would like to make a couple of comments about the inspectors. I see that this Bill is all around putting in place kind of a punishment process for inspectors and for businesses. These inspectors I'm sure are trying to do the job very adequately; but, Mr. Speaker, I think the government has to take care to make sure that they allow the inspectors to do the proper training and education throughout their careers and throughout their . . . doing their work in this area.

It's one thing to have penalties out there that will fine people or get people dismissed from their jobs, but it's certainly up to the government as a regulator to make sure that these inspectors are well trained and know the job well and also to educate the public concerning possible dangers. And of course the private and public contractors that are doing work need to obviously be well trained in these areas so that mishaps don't happen and all the proper procedures are done to maintain a safe public.

Of course as we've seen with this government in the past, the devil is in the details and we need to definitely look at the details of this legislation in the future. And before we agree to support this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I think the mention of fines for the inspectors is an item that we must certainly look at. So we'll be talking to those people in those areas.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as a property owner myself I've had a number of concerns about . . . Now this is concerning pipelines and natural gas going across my property. And as we see, I've noticed once you've given permission to have these pipelines go across your property, you're liable if you happen to be digging in those areas and hit one of those pipelines or gas lines. And so that's a concern that I think the government needs to look at as well. Proper signage on people's property is certainly one way that is out there to identify gas lines running across people's property.

But I know in my own circumstances that it's hardly enough. Especially in a yard where we have a lot of equipment and

cattle and a farming operation that's going on, it's not uncommon to be digging around or digging holes or moving earth and things like that. And it's certainly . . . I know in my case I have asked a number of times for extra signage on my property to make sure that this is looked after, Mr. Speaker.

And in the past I haven't had a great response, quite frankly, from both the private sector and the government concerning pipelines. And every year I get a notice in the mail asking what can be done to improve the situation. And every year I write the same comments that I want more signage, and well it just doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker . . . Deputy Speaker, as I said in my opening statements, public safety naturally is the most critical point, and it has to be in balance with economic development. And we've seen in the past that this government has really not looked at economic development very closely. And as we see the province loses people to other provinces. We lose the taxpayers; we lose the tax base to other jurisdictions. And in so many of the government rules and regulations it's become quite onerous and detrimental to economic development.

And as we've just seen in the last budget, this government has had to raise the PST (provincial sales tax) by 1 per cent to offset its spending requirements. And there's certainly some concern over the government's spending requirements that money is being wasted. So this government, as we have said many times in the past, has only talked about two options — one, raising taxes, and the other one is cutting back.

And this Bill, Mr. Speaker, really maybe is a small point . . . small part of that whole process. But we have to look at Bills like this to see how that affects economic development in this province, and how we can make the rules and regulations with public safety in mind to keep our public safety as the number one priority, but also to keep the economic development process in place and be competitive with other provinces. In Bills like this we have to see what is going on in other, not only other jurisdictions in Canada, but around the world as far as technology that is coming on stream.

And, Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that when we bring in these rules, regulations, and changes in Acts that there is room to manoeuvre as far as changes in procedures, as far as regulation concerning various parts of Bills and laws that are brought into place.

(16:00)

Mr. Speaker, as we know the hydrogen cell is certainly something that is coming into place and it's important that this hydrogen gas has been added to the list of gases. But, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have to work hand in hand with the private sector and agencies that are working on developing research and development into hydrogen gas and other gases that come along. Right now this hydrogen gas has been added to the list but certainly there's other options out there that are being developed in the oil and gas industry and we certainly need to leave the process open to include that as well, Mr. Speaker.

This Bill as I'd said is . . . you know at first glance seems to be

nothing more than housekeeping but as we've seen in the past that the devil is in the details, and we certainly will be asking all the stakeholders concerning the changes in this Bill and ask them what they think about the legislation. We would certainly like to speak to the inspectors and we'd like to speak to people in the private sector concerning the gas and the rules and regulations around implementing the gas in our homes and in our factories and in our businesses.

And one thing is possibly we're concerned about, is it's giving SaskPower more power and it seems to be taking away from the independent gas inspectors. And we have a concern with that — with this government the way it's handled things in the past — that it's almost a negative reaction to anything in the private sector. And this may be, through this Bill, another way of giving SaskPower more power and control over a sector that could be in the private sector, that could be done more efficiently and certainly add to the opportunity to grow this province economically.

And again, Mr. Speaker, the fines for such inspectors. It seems that before we quickly go to legislation to add extra fines to fine people, we certainly have to do a better job in the area of education, training, and awareness. And I think that's a high priority . . . should be a higher priority than just adding higher fines to this legislation that will quite possibly intimidate people from doing their work, rather than enhancing the work that they do.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with that in mind we will certainly be doing our homework as the official opposition and scrutinizing this Bill and all Bills that come forward to us. And so at this time, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Biggar has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 9 — The Electrical Inspection Amendment Act, 2004

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the minister responsible for the Saskatchewan Power Corporation.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Today I rise in this House to move second reading of the electrical inspections Act, 1993. This important piece of public safety legislation has been amended a number of times over the years, but now the time has come for this law and its regulations to be updated and modernized in order to maintain public safety and to continue to provide Saskatchewan families and businesses with a reliable source of power. Mr. Speaker, these amendments are being introduced as part of SaskPower's legal responsibility to conduct all electrical inspections in Saskatchewan.

The electrical inspections Act, 1993 protects consumers from potential hazards created during the installation and operation of electrical systems and equipment.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation sets out the legal powers and obligations that inform the work of Saskatchewan's 23 electrical inspectors as well as Saskatchewan's more than 900 electrical contractors. Each year SaskPower's electrical inspectors issue more than 66,000 permits as part of their efforts to support the safe use and operation of electrical equipment among customers, contractors, suppliers, and employees — an effort that also includes inspections and safety education.

Mr. Speaker, approval of the proposed amendments to the electrical inspections Act, 1993 will only serve to bolster the already substantial efforts being undertaken each and every day to ensure public safety related to the use of electricity in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, let me provide members of this Assembly with the highlights of the proposed amendments. First of all, the amendments include legal clarification that all Saskatchewan electrical inspectors will be required to carry and display inspector identification cards. Secondly, the chief electrical inspector will now be authorized to cancel or refuse to issue a permit to a person who supplies, transmits, distributes, or sells electrical energy contrary to section 38(1) — section 38, subsection (1) — of The Power Corporation Act without the consent of SaskPower. The amendments will provide legal authority to the chief electrical inspector to issue public safety bulletins to identify public safety hazards in a timely manner.

Another important amendment includes a general prohibition against acts of obstruction against inspectors during the performance of their duties under the electrical inspections Act, 1993. The proposed amendments include an increase from one year to two years from when the chief electrical inspector is first made aware of an offence under the Act and the time during which prosecutions can be launched for alleged offences under the Act.

There will be an increase in the maximum fines for offences under the Act, from the current \$1,000 to \$10,000, with the ultimate penalty amount remaining in the court's discretion.

Provision for director's liability for offences of corporations is part of the amendment package, as is provision for vicarious liability of employers for offences of their employees.

The amendments include revision and strengthening of the process for administrative penalties if and when contractors fail to obtain required permits.

And finally the amendments also include a requirement that all appeals of electrical inspectors' decisions be made in writing.

Mr. Speaker, let me point out to all members of this Assembly that the amendments being given second reading today also fulfill a commitment by our government in the Throne Speech to improve the safety and security of our neighbourhoods. By undertaking prudent and timely amendments to this important piece of legislation for Crowns like SaskPower, we are responding to a commitment to maintain public safety and

provide Saskatchewan families and businesses with safe, reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible power now and for the next generation.

To conclude my remarks in respect to amendments to the electrical inspections Act, 1993, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that the members on this side of the House are in full support of these important changes to this legislation, knowing that they will help ensure that the public continues to be protected, the highest standards possible. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion by the minister that Bill No. 9, The Electrical Inspection Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand in this Assembly and to present a few remarks in response to the second reading speech as delivered by the minister responsible and regarding Bill No. 9, The Electrical Inspection Act, 2004.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think we can all say that each and every one of us are well aware of the fact that public safety is a number one priority. And there's no doubt that every member in this Assembly at some time or other has been in situations or heard of situations even locally where, if individuals would have been somewhat more careful and observant, they could have prevented the significant accidents and health problems that they've had to deal with because of the lack of observing the warning signs out there regarding safety and regarding the hazardous materials or the type of material they might be working with, and especially around farmyards.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this past . . . I believe it was last fall, and we've seen it throughout the school year, schools across this province really talk about public safety. They promote public safety. They invite their students to either write . . . do poetry or do drawings in their art class or just write a little story about public safety and the importance of ensuring that we treat with respect the environment that we are living in.

And it's interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, how different students respond and how they portray the importance of watching warning signs, mentioning either through their poetry or on their drawings just drawing these big . . . these pictures and really focusing in on the stickers that are supposed to be on pieces of equipment warning us of the potential hazard if we don't conduct ourselves safely around power equipment, around machinery, and certainly respect the impact that not showing respect for being careless around serious power equipment in the province, that it can certainly present to each and every one of us.

So it's important, as the minister has indicated, that at different times we take a look at legislation as it currently exists and we review the legislation and we ask ourselves: in view of the changes that have taken place over the past number of years since the previous legislation was amended, does this legislation today address some of the major concerns that are out there? And the minister alluded to the fact that . . . Indeed I believe that's part of what this legislation is doing. It's bringing up to

date and reinforcing the fact that we are all responsible for public safety and the safety and well-being of the residents of the province of Saskatchewan, including SaskPower.

And, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to power . . . Deputy Speaker, when it comes to power, we all know of the serious consequences that can result if we do not respect what power and what touching a power line can do or what digging where underground power may be and not really getting the proper permits and disrupting . . . not only the fact that it impacts an individual's life, it could have serious impact, it could be a serious burn, consequences. Or indeed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it could result in somebody's life as well because of the fact that we haven't respected the warning signs that have been placed out there.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no doubt we need to reinforce in the public's minds the importance of respecting . . . and the responsibility of ensuring that the public are provided for safely, and that there are warnings that are very large.

And I guess the minister would probably agree. On many occasions you may think that there's a significant warning sign placed in front, that people can see it, but somehow or other we tend to have . . . our minds go blank at some times. And we know we shouldn't, but without thinking we get . . . people get in a rush.

So it's imperative that we just reinforce the fact that public safety is an important measure that we need to deal with. And I believe part of what the minister was talking about is . . . part of that is reinforcing this fact of the public safety and ensuring that inspections are done appropriately, that we have electrical inspections in the province of Saskatchewan that are addressing the needs of the construction industry — whether it's commercial, whether it's housing, whether it's business, whether it's rural, whatever component; it could be highway construction.

And contractors need to be aware of the problems that they may face if they do not . . . when they go in to do construction, whether it's digging a new basement or whether it's doing roadside work or the construction of new highways, Mr. Speaker, that these contractors are well aware of the fact that there are hazards that they need to be made aware of, and that we have the electrical inspectors available so that when requests come asking, seeking guidance, that the personnel are there to warn contractors of the consequences and of areas that they should be very observant about, and indeed be aware of, so that they can go about their business as a contractor working safely and efficiently in meeting the needs of the demands of the contract that they're currently working under.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the minister talks about . . . mentioned about 66,000 permits being available. That's a significant number of permits every year. It just shows us the importance that has been put on the fact that public safety is a feature that we certainly need to be aware of. And I'm quite well aware of the fact that the majority, if not all, of the contractors and suppliers in this province certainly are aware of the responsibilities they have — not only to their customers but as well to their employees — as they go out and work on jobs, and ensuring that they have all the permits in place, that they have

done all the research that is necessary to ensure that the job that they are currently conducting is going to be conducted safely, and not endanger the lives of individuals.

(16:15)

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there was a comment in . . . the minister's made a comment about the fact that this piece of legislation also addresses part of an election promise to ensure public safety in the province of Saskatchewan. And the minister also talked about the fact that the chief electoral inspector will now be authorized to cancel or refuse to issue a permit to a person who supplies, transmits, distributes, or sells electrical energy contrary to section 38(1) of The Power Corporation Act, without the consent of SaskPower.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, yesterday I did bring up the fact that there are so many . . . there are numerous new avenues of electrical generation that are starting to spring up as people respond to the needs of Kyoto, respond to GreenPower.

And I would assume that part of what the minister is talking about, and is in this legislation, is also keeping in mind of the demands that will be coming on the power corporation and on our province as individuals come up with new ideas of transmission of power.

And no doubt, it will be imperative that we have appropriate rules, appropriate regulations in place to ensure that as these other sources of power that are made available, and their transmission, that they are hooked up appropriately and properly, that the proper permits are applied for, and that indeed each and every one is aware of the fact that they need to receive appropriate authorization before they move forward, and with an opportunity or making a proposal to present SaskPower with that another option of meeting some of its power distribution needs, and the demand for power that we hope, Mr. Speaker, and we trust will continue to grow, as this province grows.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no doubt that we are in a position — and we have seen it the last couple years — where the demands at times have been . . . almost exceeded the ability of SaskPower to meet the needs of providing power to . . . provide the service to its customers. So we need to prepare ourselves, I believe, in the future to reach out to other avenues of providing energy sources, and indeed ensuring that the public of Saskatchewan, number one, are provided a safe transmissional source of power, as well as opening up the doors to further progress in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Deputy Speaker, one of the questions I will have as we get into further debate is does this limit . . . does this piece of legislation limit the ability of individual contractors or private inspectors to establish themselves in the province of Saskatchewan? Or is this, are these guidelines here to ensure that not only private inspectors but inspectors from SaskPower, that it includes everyone and that there is opportunity for private inspections and inspectors to set up a business in the province of Saskatchewan as long as they comply with the guidelines and that they understand what is needed as they would apply for a permit to conduct inspections in the province of Saskatchewan?

Another concern that continues to be raised, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is the timely, a timely inspection of a premises. And I know I have had different people mention about, especially in the commercial . . . or the private construction of homes and people have applied for permits. They have gone about constructing their facilities and especially . . . but probably more so in the rural rather than the urban because it is easier to get around, but on many occasions where people have waited months for an inspector to show up just to verify and confirm that the contract and the installation of the electrical work was done appropriately, and it complies with all of the guidelines and regulations regarding safety to that homeowner.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think these are some of the questions we want to discuss as we get into committee in the not too distant future — these avenues — to ensure that timely inspections do take place to meet the needs of the consuming public in the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, and in response to the member for Moose Jaw North, I think even in his constituency he wants to ensure the safe and reliable delivery of power to his customers and to his constituents and to the people in the province of . . . in the city of Moose Jaw, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's quite . . . The fact that we are moving to significant fines, one would ask has there . . . over the past number of years have we seen a neglect to have proper inspections or to indeed ensure that the proper permits have been in place before construction has proceeded? Or is the fact that we're moving from 1,000 to 10,000 as an ultimate penalty, is the minister saying that we need to increase this fine because we have had contractors who haven't totally followed the guidelines or been somewhat lax in ensuring that they've got the proper permits in place at the appropriate time before they've begun their contract, and before they proceeded with the contract or with the building of whether it's a commercial property or residential property, to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the public?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, those are . . . that's another question I think we certainly want to pursue. I believe what the minister has been saying, what the minister has indicated in his reading this second reading this afternoon, that the government is indeed indicating that it is quite serious about ensuring the public safety of all Saskatchewan residents.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as opposition members we as well want the government to be aware and want the people of Saskatchewan to be aware that we take public safety as a priority, and it's important that we all work together to ensure the public safety and the well-being of Saskatchewan residents.

So we're going to . . . we want to look very closely what this legislation does. Is it just a housekeeping Bill or is it addressing some of the inequities or the failures that have . . . over the past number of years that have been coming forward, that have been brought to the attention of government, to ensure that the people of Saskatchewan are treated fairly?

And the member from Moose Jaw North tells me, yes, that the answer is yes. Well we'll ask the minister to ensure that what the member from Moose Jaw North is indeed indicating to each

and every one of us. And rather than getting into that personal debate on the floor, we'll move on because I'm seeing the Minister of Justice shaking his head a little bit as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no doubt even in this Assembly we want to ensure the safety and well-being of the members of the Assembly. And whether or not this piece of legislation has any impact on that, that's something we'll wait and see. But it's important that we look at all the provisions of this Act to ensure that it indeed meets the needs and the requirements of the public and the province of Saskatchewan when it comes to safety. Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I indicated earlier, we all know the consequences if we do not treat power transmission, if we do not recognize overhead power lines and make people aware of the consequences.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we certainly want to take a careful look at this piece of legislation. It's imperative that Saskatchewan families are provided with safe, reliable, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible power, use and generation, for not only today but into the generations to come.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we as opposition members certainly want to indicate and we've already indicated that we take our responsibility seriously representing our constituents as seriously as the minister has indicated that his government is taking when it comes to addressing the needs of generation, power generation in this province and the public safety and well-being of Saskatchewan residents.

So, Mr. Speaker, at this . . . Mr. Deputy Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Moosomin has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I may have leave to introduce a guest.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried. The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the Speaker's gallery is Ms. Cheryl Hand who has been for many years a community health nurse in Saskatoon working for the

Saskatoon Community Clinic and is now director of nursing at the community clinic.

Cheryl Hand has always taken the provision of health care in its broadest sense and has for many years campaigned and supported . . . campaigned for and supported people living in poverty and facing the challenges that that causes to their health and to their well-being. And in particular, she has taken up the rights and interests and provides support to low-income tenants in Saskatoon.

She has assisted organization for assistance of teenage mothers requiring daycare to continue their education. She has always provided support and assistance to families and particularly to children living in poverty and provides valuable support to the Kids First delivery in Saskatoon.

I am also proud to say that she is my wife and I hope that everybody in this House welcomes her here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 10 — The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi sur l'administration des successions

The Deputy Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I rise again today to move second reading of The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill will allow the Public Guardian and Trustee to administer estates where the value of the property does not exceed \$10,000 without the requirement to apply for letters of administration.

The Administration of Estates Act establishes the priority of a relative's right to administer the estate when a person dies. If there are no next of kin willing and able to handle this responsibility, this duty falls to the Public Guardian and Trustee as the official administrator for the province.

Currently, The Administration of Estates Act provides that where a person has died and the person's executors or next of kin have not taken possession of the property, the Public Guardian and Trustee shall take possession of the deceased property for the purpose of preserving and protecting it.

Although the Act allows the Public Guardian and Trustee to exercise all the powers of administrator before bringing an application for letters of administration, the Public Guardian and Trustee is still required to bring an application for letters of administration.

In cases where the value of an estate is very small and it's inefficient for the Public Guardian and Trustee to apply for letters of administration, the amendments will allow the Public Guardian and Trustee to administer estates where the value of the property does not exceed \$10,000 without letters of

administration. This will reduce the time and cost associated with administering these small estates.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Administration of Estates Act.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 10, The Administration of Estates Amendment Act, 2004, be now read a second time.

Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Saskatoon Southeast.

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would also like to, at this time, join with the learned member opposite in welcoming Ms. Hand to the legislature today. The Minister of Justice listed some of her many achievements and I'm sure one of her more challenging ones is being a spouse to the Minister of Justice and I think she is to be commended for that particular role in life. Knowing the Minister of Justice as I have for many years, I can certainly appreciate and empathize with the challenges that Ms. Hand faces.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have had the opportunity to review this Bill and discuss it with a number of my colleagues. And in general, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the opposition is very supportive of the intent of this Bill.

I've practiced law in the city of Saskatoon for some 25 years and during that time have had to say to people dealing with small estates — 3, 4, and \$5,000 — that the cost to administer these estates was going to be very substantial because of the cost of preparing applications for letters of administration, letters probate, as well as the cost relating to advertising for creditors, filing the necessary documents, and the cost of advertising, passing accounts and making appropriate distribution once letters of administration or letters probate were granted by the court.

It makes little or no difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whether an estate is 3,000, 5,000, or 10,000, or \$100,000 — the amount of paperwork is virtually identical in all cases. And the purpose of this Bill will allow for some substantial reduction in costs to families that often will be at the low end of the asset or the income scale. So for that reason, Mr. Speaker, the opposition will want to support this, but we do take some exceptions with some of the aspects of this Bill.

(16:30)

We note that there is no prescribed plan for distribution of the excess assets after the costs of administration is there, and we presume that's either by way of oversight or because they felt that it was dealt with in other parts of the Bill. So it would be our intention to try and bring that into this Bill so that a person reading the Bill without the benefit of a lawyer would have some understanding of what the purpose of this Bill is and what they can reasonably expect to be distributed afterwards.

We note as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Bill does not preclude a family member or creditor or another interested party from dealing or applying for this. And we note as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there is provisions in this Bill to protect the public purse insofar as the administrator or the public trustee can apply for or seek costs from people that are pressing the individual to try and deal with it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for that reason we will be moving adjournment of the debate and we will be presenting some amendments to this Bill.

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Saskatoon Southeast has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 11 — The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, 2004

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is my pleasure today to outline for all members of the Assembly the substance and purpose of the amendments included in this Bill. This is a straightforward Bill to amend the existing statute by repealing a number of outdated and redundant provisions and to make some consequential changes.

As its title indicates, this Act was originally passed when the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training existed as a discrete department within the Government of Saskatchewan. In the spring of 2002 the department was disestablished and merged with the Department of Education to become the new Department of Learning.

Like most government departments these days, the Department of Learning was established through regulations made under The Government Organization Act. Accordingly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amending Bill repeals all those provisions of the Act that deal specifically with the Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training as those provisions are clearly unnecessary and do not need to be incorporated in any other statute.

In addition, the existing Act includes a number of sections of parallel provisions of The Government Organization Act. These sections deal with generic matters such as retaining consultants, paying grants, establishing committees, and entering into agreements. Since The Government Organization Act gives the Minister of Learning exactly the same authority in these areas, the relevant sections are being repealed as being an unnecessary duplication.

One additional point I wish to note deals with the consumer education. There is a specific clause in the existing Act that gives the Minister of Learning jurisdiction in this area. The clause is being removed and transferred to The Consumer and

Commercial Affairs Act since that area now falls within the purview of the Minister of Justice under that legislation.

The existing Act gives the Minister of Learning essential powers and duties with respect to the universities, other post-secondary institutions, apprenticeship and trade certification, career and employment services, and student financial assistance. These provisions are all being retained as they do not exist in any other statute or regulation and are a major component in the overall portfolio of the Minister of Learning.

As I have indicated, these amendments in the Bill are strictly of a technical nature being designed to update the Act by eliminating outdated and redundant provisions. I am therefore pleased to move that Bill No. 11, An Act to amend The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Act, 2000, and to make certain consequential amendments, be now read a second time.

The Deputy Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is a motion by the minister that Bill No. 11, The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member from Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's with pleasure that I rise this afternoon to speak about The Department of Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training Amendment Act, Bill No. 11.

Mr. Speaker, as the minister outlined, in many respects this is largely a housekeeping Bill designed to combine two previously separated departments into one Department of Learning. And insofar as this Bill accomplishes those technical matters, the official opposition will have no difficulty with that concept.

However I think it's important to recognize that many aspects of this Bill and of the post-secondary education Act have grave concerns to the future of post-secondary education and university and technical school training in this province. And certainly the situation that students are facing right now at SIAST is a perfect example of how these types of amendments and this type of legislation impacts very directly and very significantly on the people of this province and particularly those people requiring the services of a post-secondary learning institution.

Mr. Speaker, it has been rather troubling over the last while, when you listen to the heads of the universities and listen to the heads of the SIAST campuses, that the concerns they've raised is that the NDP government has been unable or unwilling to be able to provide the necessary resources for them to really accomplish their mandate. And as a result, there is in most instances rather dramatic increases in tuition fees. And, in fact, StatsCanada reports that student tuition fees are rising much more quickly than inflation. And this falls on the backs of the students and their families and creates a great deal of hardship.

It was interesting today in question period. The minister, when asked what are students supposed to do in respect to the hardships that they are experiencing because of the SIAST disruption, he said something to the effect, Mr. Deputy Speaker,

that they should go see their lending institutions and the financial institutions as if, well this isn't his problem, this is the students' problem. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is of grave concern to the official opposition that this attitude seems to persist in the Learning minister's department — that, you know, that we can just sort of sit back and take our time and let all these processes occur.

And at the same time that that's occurring — and the minister so flippantly dismisses any concerns raised by the official opposition about what the impact of these decisions are on students — it is ironic that today we'd be having second reading of this amendment and it's dealt with as a trivial housekeeping type of a Bill.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the concerns of the students and of their families and the financial burdens placed upon them are real concerns. They're not theoretical concerns; they're not concerns that can be easily dismissed. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to be cognizant and mindful of the type of amendments that we're making to legislation has direct impact and severe impact on many of our citizens in this province.

And certainly what I am very worried about and very fearful of is that the government's dismissive attitude about this very serious issue of the post-secondary education amendments are such that it's going to create an attitude in this province that, you know, the province and the government of this province didn't care for us as students. They really don't seem to really be worried about if we're going to successfully complete our programs or not.

If they are going to be able to complete the programs it's very likely right now is that it's going to cost significant more money for these students to complete their programs. Even the minute kind of challenges of having to carry an apartment or a place of residence over for an extra month sounds like it's no big deal to this government, but to a student who is struggling with a student loan and their family who are struggling to support them, these issues are important, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to say that, you know this amendment is just housekeeping in nature. And yet it has some real impact and it had the potential at least of positively dealing with many of the issues faced by students.

Students are having a greater difficulty in finding enough money — even in the student loan program with the support of their families — in order to make sure that they have enough money to buy all their supplies, to buy their necessary living requirements in order to get an education. And we are told time and time again that students are graduating from programs with huge debt loads that are a responsibility that they take very seriously and have to find ways of dealing with as they begin their careers and in many instances begin their families.

And so the opportunity to deal with these issues in this Bill while the Bill is being opened and amended seems to be missed as an opportunity to move forward and address these issues.

Many of these Bills, Mr. Deputy Speaker, insofar as they are worded on their own, are pretty innocuous; they arguably are housekeeping in nature. What's of concern is when we talk

about these amendments and we talk about the opportunity that's raised when we have a Bill that's opened and potentially is going to be amended. What about the potential to improve this legislation and actually make it a better piece of legislation by dealing with some of these serious issues that the people of Saskatchewan and students in Saskatchewan are expressing? And there's no more timely opportunity to do that than it is right now where we have a major labour disruption in SIAST.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it's not sufficient just to sort of say, well the Bill insofar as it goes is fine. It really is a very grave disappointment not only of the official opposition, but of parents and students and citizens of Saskatchewan, to realize that this government is missing an opportunity to address some of these very significant issues that exist for families in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it seems to require some sensitivity on the other side of the House that obviously doesn't exist. But I mean for most people in this province who have raised children, who have helped them acquire a post-secondary education degree or trade or certificate of some sort, they realize how much sacrifice is needed in order to help a young person get a start in life.

Every one of our families in Saskatchewan all inherently want something more for their children than what they had for themselves. Every one of our families have dreams for their children that are more than the dreams that they had for themselves. And every one of them are concerned about the lack of concern and the very arrogant kind of attitude that exists in this government about the situation facing these families. There's 12,000 students that are at risk of having their programs lost or severely jeopardized and certainly going to be more costly.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, those students and their families are concerned about the attitude of this government and they're concerned because we're missing an opportunity to improve the situation to get the post-secondary education concerns and issues addressed in a more meaningful way on the table. And the opportunity for this Bill is before this legislature, and there's no reason in the world why the government should be dismissing it and treating it as just a trivial housekeeping piece of legislation.

There is not only concerns that people have in the province about the things the government does for them, they're also concerned about the things the government doesn't do when it has the opportunity to do the right thing. And this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is one of those opportunities that I feel are going to be lost, are going to be squandered. And that I think is a very grave disappointment not only to ourselves but to people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, one of the very grave concerns that we've had — and we've articulated many years now about this government — is their seemingly uncaring attitude about particularly young people in the province. And the message gets out to young people and they say: look it, if this is the way and how little the government thinks of us, this is how little the government thinks of our programs, this is how little the government thinks of the challenges that we face, the first opportunity we are going to have to get out of here, we're gone. We're . . . turn our

backs to this province where we were born and raised and we'll start a new life where we think that there may be greater opportunities and a place where maybe we're appreciated to a greater degree than seems to be the case in Saskatchewan.

And the concern — the concern about that, Mr. Deputy Speaker — is that some of those decisions are irreversible. Once these young people leave it's irreversible in many instances. They move to other jurisdictions, they meet a spouse, they settle down, and they have a family and they're not likely coming back except at Christmas and Easter, and maybe for a summer holiday visit to visit their poor parents who are left here wondering what happened.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what happened is when the government had the opportunity to properly put some amendments in the post-secondary education and skills training amendment Act, when they had the opportunity to put amendments into that legislation, when that legislation was opened up and there was the opportunity to make improvements in it, Mr. Speaker, these people are going to sit back here and say: you know this government missed the opportunity to deal with some of these fundamental issues and the problems that we're experiencing, and they're going to sit and wonder why their children have left this province. And it is no wonder given the attitude of this government and it's callous, uncaring attitude about dealing with some of these fundamental very simple problems that people of this province are experiencing.

(16:45)

Mr. Speaker, these are the concerns that we have. It isn't just the fact that the i's are being dotted and the t's crossed in this piece of this legislation in order to combine two departments. I mean, that's technical housekeeping issues and we certainly have no problem with that.

What we have a fundamental problem with is this government's attitude of the sins of omission, if you like, Mr. Speaker, because they've omitted to take the opportunity to deal with the fundamental issues that students and their families are expressing as concern in this province. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we think that that is a huge problem and a huge opportunity lost.

Mr. Speaker, there have certainly been concerns expressed by the presidents of the universities, the presidents of the SIAST colleges about the level of support and how it's directed, and how that we can find creative ways so that students are not experiencing tuition rate increases that are much higher than inflation.

We've got to deal with those cost realities for these students, and we have to find a way that we send a message is that we value post-secondary education. We want our young people to have the opportunity of these fine training and educating institutions. And more importantly even than all of that — as important as all of that is, Mr. Deputy Speaker — we need to send the message that we care and we're trying to understand about their issues. And most importantly, that we want them to stay and build their careers here in Saskatchewan and build a future here in Saskatchewan so that we can grow this province.

Because we're never going to get out of this downward spiral that our students are facing if we don't take the opportunity to deal with their fundamental issues when Bills are amended, and so that we can actually create an atmosphere of growth in this province instead of a feeble attempt at managing the decline and the demise of this province. There is sort of a third way, if you like, and that's to grow the province and so that we change the attitudes and we get this province on track for the future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are concerned about what these students are going to do and a lost opportunity that is afforded us in this piece of legislation in order to create opportunities for these students.

Their programs are being delayed, their programs are going to cost more, their calendars are being disrupted. Some of them may find it uneasy or unable to, indeed, pick up the pieces of their career, their summer jobs, and summer job placements where there's commitments of when they should start work to try to earn some money in order to help afford and to help their family afford these costs are going to be lost. All of these issues are going to create a very negative attitude in the minds of students about their future in this province.

And that's a travesty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because at the end of the day — at the end of the day — this government can have its priorities of spending money on glitzy advertising campaigns saying we need an attitude change, glitzy advertising campaigns saying come to Saskatchewan. And while they're wasting money on these kinds of programs, they're not fundamentally dealing with the issues that are common sense and commonplace for the students and their families in this province. It's wasted priorities, Mr. Speaker.

It seems to me to be amazing. We can't deal with the issues facing students. We have an opportunity here to deal with those issues. We had a golden opportunity to include some of the priorities of students and their families in this province. We had a glorious opportunity in this Bill when it's being opened up and clarified and the details are being presented in it. We had a perfect opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to deal with some of these misplaced priorities. And it seems to be a shame that we have not properly taken advantage of this opportunity.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, people in this province are shaking their heads when they listen to what's happening — when they watch question period, and they see the cavalier kind of attitude of the Learning minister. And they say, how in the world are we going to get the education system on track when there's such a lack of sensitivity about the concerns of the students who this whole system should be for?

If we're thinking of why we're doing this, if we think why we should take the opportunity to properly amend this legislation, we have to surely be doing it in the best interests of the students of today and the students of the future. Not only to provide their training and their education, to provide them opportunities for growth and personal development — it has to be more than that so that they find a reason to stay in this province and to take a chance on this province. To realize the Saskatchewan dream and the potential of this province, they need to believe in this province and that the people who are in charge of the government of this province, who have the awesome

responsibility of leading the province, they have to understand that we're all in this together, and we understand what's going on, and we understand their hurts and fears and pain. And we were going to address it when we had the opportunity to amend the legislation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, that simply isn't here. And so it is with great difficulty that we address this issue. We think it's important to deal with those fundamental issues because so much is riding on it. We can't simply take out an ad in the newspaper and say, change your attitude and think it's just automatically going to happen because we've put an ad in the paper. We have to instill a commitment to the people of this province and to the students of this province that we care and understand what their worries and fears are all about. And we are going to take the opportunity when an amendment is in place of dealing with those issues.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Minister of Agriculture was in my community and he was talking about we need an attitude change. Well we do need an attitude change, but it's got to start with that government opposite, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They need to start caring about the fundamental people of this province, not just coming to a meeting and standing at a podium and lecturing them about their poor attitude.

What they need to do is show, by leadership and by commitment to an opportunity to amend legislation, that they understand what the concerns are and that they are going to do the things that are necessary.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no problem with the technical amendments in this piece of legislation, but I have great problems and concerns about what isn't in this legislation — the opportunities that have been lost and the message it's showing to the students of this province.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we really believe that this legislation misses an opportunity and we think it is important for the people of this province to have an opportunity to comment on this legislation. And in order for them to have the time to do that, I would move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Deputy Speaker: — The member for Melfort has moved adjournment of debate. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

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

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

The Deputy Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now stand

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: — That is carried. This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. Thank you.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:53.

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