



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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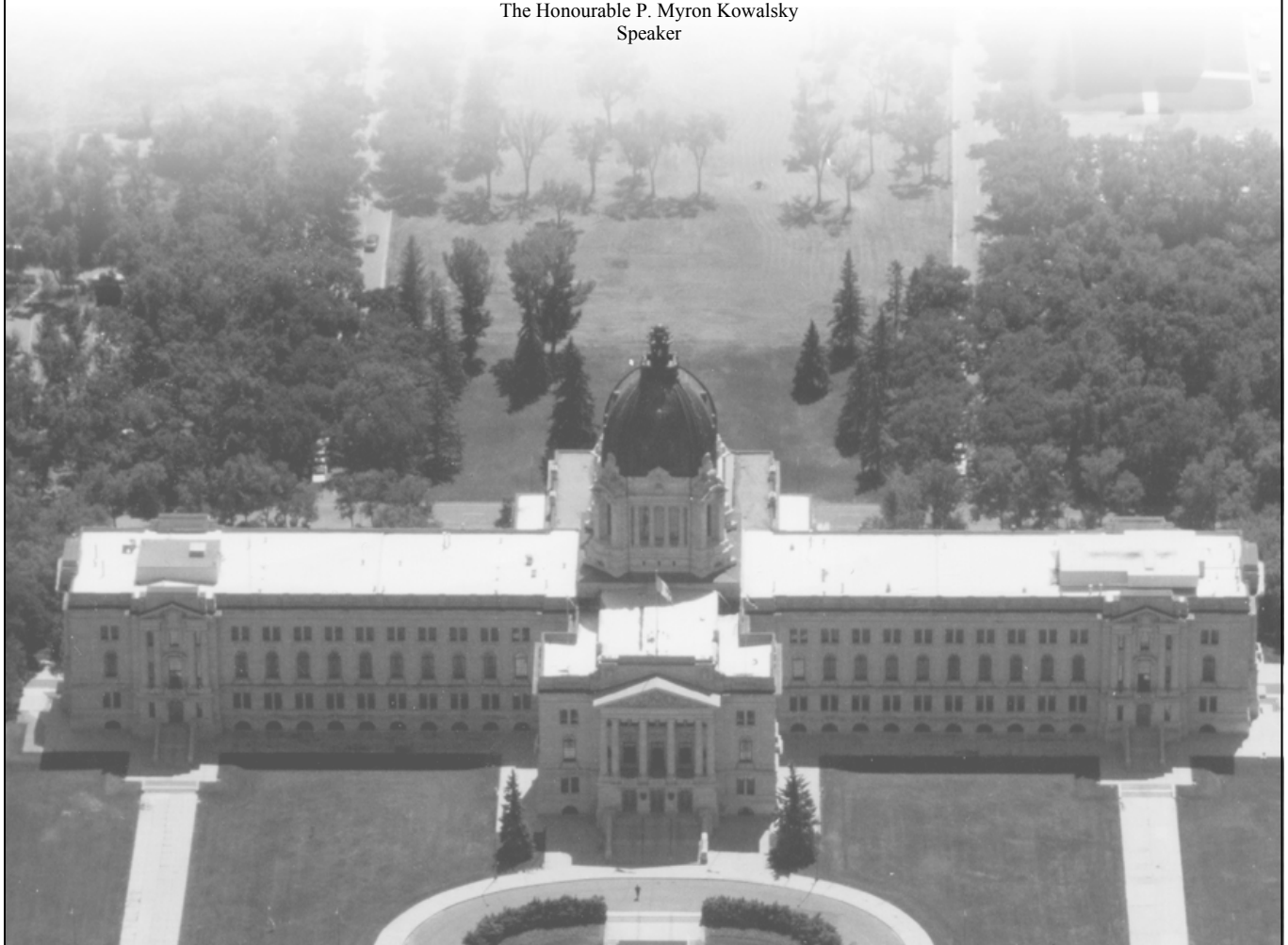
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
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The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents from the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency who are concerned about the possible closure of long-term care facilities. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that long-term care facilities in the Weyburn-Big Muddy constituency are not closed or further downsized.

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

And this petition is signed by residents of Ogema, Bengough, Pangman, and Ceylon.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens, in this case from various areas that have had the unfortunate experience of travelling Highway 43 east of . . . west of Gravelbourg. And the petition reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens from Gravelbourg, Bateman, Glenbain, and as far away as Moline, Illinois and British Columbia.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition dealing with repairs to highways:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that this portion of 15 Highway be repaired and resurfaced immediately so as to remove the safety hazard to all motorists who rely on this

vital road for transportation and economic purposes.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Semans, Saskatchewan.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again I rise in the House today to present a petition on behalf of citizens in west central Saskatchewan concerned with the Unity seniors' lodge project. 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.

There are many, many signatures on this particular petition, Mr. Speaker, including Unity, Calgary, Saskatoon, Luseland, and Macklin.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to present a petition on behalf of Saskatchewan citizens who are very concerned about the condition of Highway 22 between Junction No. 6 and Junction 20. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take immediate action and make necessary repairs to Highway 22 in order to address safety and economic concerns.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signatures to the petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Earl Gray, Regina, and Viceroy.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have yet another petition from Rosetown-Elrose regarding crop insurance, and the concern that people have to changes to the crop insurance program which result in premium increases for insured farmers, while overall coverage is reduced. Now, Mr. Speaker, the prayer of this 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 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 the communities of Beechy, Demaine, and Lucky Lake.

I am pleased to present it on their behalf.

### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and they are all in order. They are addendums to sessional paper nos. 48, 65, 69, 72, 106, 107, and 108.

### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Finance: How much money did the provincial government receive from the federal government for the Canada Health Infoway in the fiscal years beginning 2001 and going up and through 2005; and how much of this money was allocated to the provincial health budget in each respective year?

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of SPMC: what was the revenue generated through Echo Valley Conference Centre, and what were the operating expenses incurred by the facility in the fiscal year 2001-2002; and the same question for 2002 and 2003?

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To Saskatchewan Property Management minister: will SPMC be making any purchase of new and/or used vehicles for the Central Vehicle Agency in the 2004 calendar year? If so, can the minister provide how many, the make, model, year, and cost of each vehicle?

While I'm on my feet I have another question.

To the SPMC minister. Does SPMC purchase any of the natural gas it uses in its properties in Saskatchewan from a company other than SaskEnergy; and if so, which properties use gas from a different company?

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 28 ask the government the following question:

To the SaskPower minister: what is the minimum rate charge for disconnect and reconnect for a commercial customer specifically around seasonal buildings, and how is this rate determined?

I so present.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it gives me real pleasure today to introduce another group of school students from my constituency.

Today we have 36 students from Gull Lake School. We've got 15 grade 4 students and 21 grade 12 students. I'll bet that was an interesting ride up here, Mr. Speaker.

But they're accompanied today for this learning experience by teachers, Adele Kirwan and Werner Mueller, and we've got — let's see here. We've got Kerri Girodat, Jaunita Roosen, Lynne Smart, Lois Thienes, and Teresa Broberg, as well as Cindy Girodat accompanying them. A big group and I'm sure they're going to enjoy their time here. We are going to make sure they enjoy their time, Mr. Speaker. We're going to meet with them a little later and we're going to have an opportunity to talk to them.

Would you please welcome them, Mr. Speaker. As long as they're here they might as well be welcomed properly.

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

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

**Mr. D'Autremont:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the Assembly, I would also like to introduce a group of students.

We have 15 grade 11 students, the law 30 class, from the 33 Central School. And I can see everybody's wondering where 33 Central School is. Well, 33 Central School is in Fillmore, Saskatchewan. The students are sitting up in the east gallery. Along with them is their teacher, Andrew Kidd, and bus driver, Deb Wilson, Mr. Speaker. And I drive through Fillmore every time I go back and forth between home and the legislature, Mr. Speaker. They have a very good restaurant there.

Mr. Speaker, I've already had the opportunity to meet and talk with the students. And we had a very good discussion, and they had some very good questions. And I would ask everyone to welcome them here today.

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

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Earth Day

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Yes, Mr. Speaker, today is Earth Day, a day to raise awareness about our impact on the environment and to honour the earth, the place we call home. Mr. Speaker, Earth Day is the largest, most celebrated environmental event worldwide.

More than 6 million Canadians join 500 million people in more than 180 countries in hosting events to address local environmental issues. In Saskatchewan events and activities are taking place across the province throughout the day.

Here in Regina the Royal Saskatchewan Museum is hosting its second annual Earth Day green event, where the museum will plant and dedicate a tree within Wascana Park. The museum has also co-sponsored an essay contest on Why I Love This Earth. The winners of this contest will be announced on CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) and the essays will be read as they broadcast the *Afternoon Edition* live from the museum lobby.

And, Mr. Speaker, on April 24 the Royal Saskatchewan Museum will offer a number of family activities including tours, arts and crafts, and live musical entertainment.

Mr. Speaker, Earth Day is a celebration and a reminder to think globally and act locally. It's also a reminder that preserving our environment is a community effort and takes commitment from each and every one of us every day.

I ask all members to join me in thanking the Royal Saskatchewan Museum and everyone involved in Earth Day 2004 for helping raise awareness on environmental issues. And I invite everybody to join me in celebrating Earth Day.

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

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize April 22 as Earth Day.

First held in the United States in 1970 to heighten awareness about the natural environment around us, Earth Day has grown into an international event. This year six million Canadians will join half a billion people from 180 countries around the world to take part in projects designed to address environmental issues.

Mr. Speaker, as a society we are called upon to balance many interests, but a clean and healthy environment is in all of our best interests. Good environmental stewardship is not separate and apart from a growing economy and development. The two can and must go together. In Saskatchewan our natural environment is one of the key advantages afforded us as we strive to build a stronger and more prosperous province.

It is my hope, Mr. Speaker, that environmental issues do not simply enter our thoughts on this one day of the year but throughout the entire year. I thank you.

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

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

### Women of Today Awards

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the pleasure of attending the sixth annual Women of Today Awards luncheon at the Beefeater Plaza in Estevan. This event, sponsored by SaskPower and Quota International of Estevan, was attended by over 300 people.

For the Ida Petterson Memorial Award for Outstanding Entrepreneur, nominees were Gayle Gustafson and Caroline Saxon, with Caroline Saxon being the recipient.

The SaskPower Award for Outstanding Contribution to the Workplace nominees were Laurie Decker, Margaret Duncan, Pauline Ziehl Grimsrud, Shelley Jahn, Joyce Mack, Colleen MacMillan, Holly McFadden, and Sandi Whitford. Recipient was Margaret Duncan.

The Shirley Orsted Memorial Award for Young Woman of Today nominees were Meghan Betnar, Kelly Day, Danielle Morden, Charlene Zimmerman, and Rene Pylypuk. Recipient was Kelly Day.

Mr. Speaker, funds raised through this luncheon are used to support two very worthwhile causes — the violence intervention program and the placement of free field FM (frequency modulation) hearing systems in Estevan schools.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate and thank the organizers and sponsors of this event, and also thank Roxy Blackmore for very capably emceeding this event. Guest speaker was Lana Doke, and she was enjoyed by all.

Congratulations to all nominees and recipients. You are all winners. Thank you.

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

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

### Teaching Treaties in the Classroom

**Ms. Junor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In order to have racial harmony, respect is needed. In order to have respect, understanding is required. In order to achieve understanding, you need . . . education . . . education becomes the real foundation, the real facilitator, of social harmony.

Mr. Speaker, those are the words of Judge Dave Arnot, Saskatchewan's Treaty Commissioner, whose office was recently singled out in a United Nations report as an example of using innovative, community-based, educational programming to fight racism.

One of the educational tools that the Office of the Treaty Commissioner uses is a kit entitled "Teaching Treaties in the

Classroom,” designed to help students learn about the treaty relationship as their first step towards understanding the role of treaties in our history, in our society, and in our future.

This initiative is part of a made-in-Saskatchewan process that brings together the Federation of Saskatchewan Indians and the governments of Canada and Saskatchewan to help foster understanding between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in this province.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud of the role our government played in this program, in particular the role of the Department of Learning, in recognizing education as the foundation of understanding and along with our partners in supporting treaties . . . teaching treaties in the classroom.

I also want to acknowledge Judge Arnot and all those involved in the project for their good work encouraging Saskatchewan people to learn from each other and work together to build a strong and prosperous future. Thank you.

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

(13:45)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Swift Current.

#### **Swift Current Athlete Wins University of Saskatchewan Trophy**

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the exceptional accomplishments of an athlete from Swift Current. Mr. Speaker, a graduate from the comp high school in Swift Current has recently been named the 2004 all round female Huskie athlete by the University of Saskatchewan.

Mandi Tasche was presented with the Valerie Girsberger Trophy for her outstanding accomplishments with the Huskies track and field program. It's the highest award given to a female athlete who represents outstanding leadership, sportsmanship, academic and athletic abilities.

During her six-year career, Mandi helped the Huskies win CIS (Canadian University Sport) team championships in track and field in 2000, 2001, 2003, and 2004. Mandi won numerous medals and she also set a Canada West record in women's triple jump in 2003.

Even more impressive, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that Mandi had to take a year off as a result of back surgery for a herniated disc. Mandi will be graduating from the University of Saskatchewan this year with a Bachelor of Science in physics and math and also a Bachelor of Education degree.

Mr. Speaker, I'd ask all members of this legislature to congratulate Mandi Tasche on an outstanding university track and field career, and to offer her nothing but the very best for her future. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### **Marathon in Rome**

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate a constituent of mine, Don McKay of Cumberland House, who recently completed a marathon in Rome, Italy as a member of Team Diabetes Canada.

Mr. Speaker, participants in Team Diabetes Canada raise money for diabetes research, education, service, and advocacy. Thanks to people like Don McKay, Team Diabetes Canada has raised three and a half million dollars since it began in 1999.

Mr. Speaker, Don was one of 82 members of team Canada at the Rome marathon, with four from Saskatchewan. Don was the only representative from northern Saskatchewan. And I am pleased to report that he and his teammates raised almost half a million dollars for the Canadian Diabetes Association.

Mr. Speaker, Don reports there were 11,000 runners at the starting line, and that he crossed the finish line within a respectable time of 4 hours and 35 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate Don McKay both on his accomplishments as a marathon runner, and for his support for the Canadian Diabetes Association. Thank you.

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

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

#### **International Special Librarians Day**

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize some very important people today. This is International Special Librarians Day, and today we honour the contributions made by this group of people by promoting their roles in the global information community.

I would also like to make special mention of the people working in our Legislative Library, people who make life so much easier for both MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and staff when they need information, as they always produce it in an expeditious manner. The people that work in the library in this building do this job with a smile and they do their job very well.

Mr. Speaker, the people that work so hard, that I would like to recognize are — and I apologize if I miss anyone — Marian Powell, Pat Kolesar, Leslie Polsom, Jane Blackett, Bette Desjarlais, Tim Prince, Liza Vidomski, Kim Heidebrecht, Ivana Ruzic, Gina Abel, Faye Prince, Anne Hoffmann, Chris Oxman, Maria Swarbrick, Shannon Hynds, and Pam Yungwirth.

Mr. Speaker, these people deserve a special thank you from all members of this Assembly, and I'd ask all members join me in thanking them.

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

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

#### **Quality Improvement Champion Award**

**Mr. Hagel:** — Mr. Speaker, health care professionals in Saskatchewan continue to demonstrate excellent and innovative

approaches to providing care for patients across the province.

One such professional is Mike Haines, the manager of clinical engineering services for the Five Hills Health Region, who recently won the Quality Improvement Champion Award. This award is part of the Health Quality Council's Stellar Awards for Quality.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in nominating Mr. Haines, director of environmental services for the Five Hills Health Region, John Liguori, wrote these words:

Mike Haines has demonstrated real leadership and commitment to quality improvement in implementing a sound region-wide preventative maintenance program for all critical medical equipment in the Five Hills Health Region.

Mr. Speaker, through this program, managers and staff are consulted and regularly educated on matters concerning medical instrumentation. This process allows the clinical engineering department to ensure that all departments and services receive the best technical support.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of Mr. Haines's initiative, preventative maintenance on critical medical equipment increased — get this, Mr. Speaker — from 152 devices last year to 365 this year.

I'm sure all members will join me in thanking Mr. Haines for his contribution to the health care in our province. We value the work that he and his colleagues do, and we congratulate Mr. Haines on his accomplishments. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Staffing for Regina Police Services

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday Regina police chief, Cal Johnston, said that if the NDP (New Democratic Party) government had lived up to its 1999 promise of 200 additional police officers, Regina would have 12 more officers than it does now. That's three officers per shift, Mr. Speaker. And as Cal Johnston sees it, three extra officers on the street could have made a difference on April 7. As Johnston himself said, and I quote:

Would three more cars have helped in this case? Sure it would have.

Mr. Speaker, when will the NDP finally live up to one of its election promises from five years ago to add . . . live up to its commitment of 200 new officers?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, this is what Chief

Johnston said — at least in this report in the *Leader-Post* on Thursday, April 22; I believe that's this morning:

Johnston said the police department was overloaded with "a freakish" high number of emergency calls . . .

And a procedure has been changed to attempt to avoid what happened on April 7.

. . . he said the situation does not in itself prove that the Regina Police Service is understaffed.

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

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

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that those freakish high numbers will continue to exist. Since January until now we have . . . the break-and-enter rate in Regina is up 65 per cent.

And according to Cal Johnston, the Regina Police Service has 342 officers, which is less officers than the early 1990s. Saskatchewan has one of the highest crime rates when it comes to homicides, assaults, and property crimes. So there is a need for 200 new officers. Otherwise why would this government promise them?

I want to ask the minister — a simple yes and no — will he commit today to providing new officers for Regina Police Service if the internal review shows that resources did indeed have an effect on April 7?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Chief Johnston said:

. . . the situation does not in itself prove the Regina Police Services is understaffed.

That's his conclusion.

"It is not something that you can determine on a single call," . . .

I think that's a reasonable assessment by a reasonable person, and any reasonable person would make the same assessment. And you can draw what inference you like, Mr. Speaker, from the assessment on the other side.

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

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

#### SaskTel's Business Investments

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

Between 2001 and 2004, the NDP government gambled a total

of \$6.9 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money on a company in Nashville, Tennessee, called *tappedinto.com*. Will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan how much money the NDP lost on this Nashville dot-com in 2003?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know I read an article in the *Leader-Post*, March 16 of this year. And here's the quote, Mr. Speaker. It says:

Wall said he has learned lessons from the Saskatchewan Party's loss in the Nov. 5 election and restated his call for a sweeping policy review by the party and a new focus on social issues.

I quote:

"We'll ask our members to stretch beyond their comfort zone, stretch their parameters (and look) and maybe look at policy areas (we've not) we're not used to looking at," he said in his speech.

Well, Mr. Speaker, have they learned new lessons? By this line of questioning, I suspect not. Mr. Speaker, are they stretching themselves? I don't think so.

Mr. Speaker, I think they look pretty comfortable as well in opposition. And, Mr. Speaker, they will remain in opposition for years and years and years to come if they don't understand that SaskTel will have to diversify just as every other telephone company in the world is diversifying, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I can assure you of one thing. The one credibility that . . . or the one thing that's being stretched right here now is the credibility of this government.

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Based on SaskTel's annual report today, the credibility of the NDP is in serious doubt, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP gambled a total of \$6.9 million on a Nashville-based company called *tappedinto.com*. And in just three short years that business gamble has lost for the taxpayers of Saskatchewan a total of \$6.2 million, every dime, Mr. Speaker, every dime of which comes out of profits that SaskTel employees make providing services to Saskatchewan people in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister tell the people of Saskatchewan how much money the NDP lost on its Toronto stock market gamble in a Newfoundland-based telco called Persona Inc?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, the world, it's changing, Mr. Speaker. The opposition might not understand that but, Mr. Speaker, there has been huge diversification in the telephone industry.

Mr. Speaker, for those who don't remember in the '80s, who the government was in the 1980s, Mr. Speaker, I want to say something to you and to the people of Saskatchewan. In the 1980s, not singling out that government of the day, but let's say pre-diversification, pre-deregulation, here's the net profit of SaskTel in '84, 36 million; '85, 37 million. In 1986, 37.

Now let's move into the era of deregulation and diversification. Mr. Speaker, 2001, SaskTel bottom-line, net profit, 101 million; 2002, 65 million; and 2003 — today, Mr. Speaker — 85 million.

Is diversification working? I think it's working pretty good for the people of Saskatchewan.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, an \$85 million profit, a big part of which was made up by a currency exchange over which this government had no control . . . Mr. Speaker, maybe the minister doesn't want to talk about it, but he must be aware, he must be aware of the NDP's \$15 million stock market gamble in Newfoundland. And the minister should also be aware that that . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. I would just like to be able to hear the question in its entirety. The member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister should be aware that that stock market gamble lost Saskatchewan taxpayers another \$6.4 million. That \$6.4 million, that came right out of the profits that SaskTel employees made providing telephone, cell, and Internet services to Saskatchewan families and businesses right here in Saskatchewan.

Maybe the minister will be able to share with the people of Saskatchewan how much money the NDP government lost last year on its Vancouver-based telco business called Navigata Communications.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I will listen to analysts, Mr. Speaker, who know what they're talking about, people like Iann Grant and others, Mr. Speaker, who say that SaskTel is one of the best telephone companies in North America if not in the world, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this same Sask Party who supposedly has learned their lessons, Mr. Speaker, said we should get out of SecurTek. They said we should get out. It was profitable last year; it is profitable this year. It employs 76 people in Yorkton, Mr. Speaker. I think we'll stay for a while.



Mr. Speaker, these are the same people who last year said that we should get out of *Max* TV. Mr. Speaker, we now have over 17,000 subscribers, and again I say for the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, who missed it when I reported it, SaskTel would like him to get up and ask questions because every time he asked a question about *Max* they got a bump up of some 300 new members or subscribers, Mr. Speaker. So ask some more questions about that.

Mr. Speaker, the point is that there will be losses and, Mr. Speaker, there will be winners, but SaskTel has a record of many, many more winners than losers, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, the annual report of SaskTel does not indicate very many winners; I must say. Mr. Speaker, the NDP keeps telling us these multi-million dollar business losses outside of Saskatchewan are somehow good for SaskTel, that they're good for the families and businesses who are served by SaskTel right here in Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, the minister should know his NDP government has gambled \$45 million of Saskatchewan's taxpayers' money on a Vancouver company called Navigata Communications just since 2002, and over that two-year period the NDP has lost a whopping \$25.1 million on this Vancouver-based business gamble.

Will the minister please explain to this House and to the people of Saskatchewan how losing \$25 million on a business gamble in Vancouver is good for either SaskTel or the people of this province?

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

(14:00)

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, again I'm not sure lessons have been learned. But let me pick Navigata because he's talked about it.

Mr. Speaker, Navigata, you can look at its specific bottom line if you want. But for the parent company, last year alone it saved \$7 million. It's projected on an annual basis to save the people of Saskatchewan some 10 to \$12 million on an annual basis. So if the company doesn't make any money, it will save the parent company 10 million a year. But it's projected to be profitable this year, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, let's pick another company that the Leader of the Opposition talked about, Astar, who they said we should get out of. Mr. Speaker, we invested \$39 million, Mr. Speaker. We had a write up of some 42; we had a writedown of about 40. And you know what, Mr. Speaker? This year they sold shares and it made 2.8. Mr. Speaker, the net, the net, Mr. Speaker, is some \$2.8 million to the good. We still hold 4 million in shares.

Mr. Speaker, should we have dumped it when they said we should? I don't think so. We're making money on them, Mr.

Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, for the people in this province who are still working . . . or waiting for Internet service and good cell service coverage, you know, a play on the Australian stock market really can't be justified.

Mr. Speaker, one of the worst business gambles that this NDP government ever made outside Saskatchewan over the past number of years is its adventure in Atlanta, Georgia, with a company called Retx.com. Now the NDP has invested a total of \$26.7 million in Retx since 2001.

Will the minister stand and tell the people of Saskatchewan how much money Retx has paid in dividends to the people of this province in return for that \$26.7 million investment in Atlanta, Georgia?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I want to go back to where I started, Mr. Speaker, and that is the world is changing. And the opposition doesn't understand it.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it used to be that the telephone companies used to have hundreds and thousands of operators, but technology has advanced and things have changed and companies have to diversify. I don't think the opposition realizes that. They want us to go back to those old days.

Mr. Speaker, I expect some morning to come in here and find a bunch of horse and buggies parked in the opposition's stalls out in front, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, please understand that every telephone company in the world is diversifying. Many of the other companies had, in their total investment portfolio, what they would call non-core investments — up to 40 and 50 per cent of their portfolio, Mr. Speaker. SaskTel, its share of investment portfolio that it invests, as some would say outside of the core, is limited to about 10 per cent. We think that it is absolutely required that we diversify to be successful, Mr. Speaker. And we're going to keep the companies.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, the world may be changing, but a loss is still a loss — this year, last year, and in the years to come — a loss at the expense of the taxpayers of this province.

Mr. Speaker, it's bad enough when I lose my own money, gambling it. It's far worse, it's far worse when a government takes the hard-earned . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. We want to be able to hear the questions. We want to be able to hear the responses.

I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A loss is far worse when it's taken from the subscribers of this telephone service in this province and gambled in risky ventures outside the province.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to help the minister out in this whole issue. I'm sure he already knows that the NDP gambled 26.7 million taxpayers' dollars in Retx.com based in Atlanta, Georgia. And, Mr. Speaker, do you know how much that investment is worth today? Not a single dime, Mr. Speaker. Not a single dime. According to SaskTel's annual report, the NDP has lost every last nickel of that investment, that \$26.7 million investment.

So once again, Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain to the people of Saskatchewan how losing \$26.7 million of Saskatchewan taxpayers' money in Atlanta, Georgia, is good for either SaskTel or the people of this province?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister Responsible for SaskTel.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well the member is right. A loss is still a loss; of course it is. But please explain to me how come nobody in the opposition could get out of their seats and say a profit is still a profit? When they increased the value of the shares of Austar, Mr. Speaker, some 40-plus million dollars, did you hear one of those members get up out of their seats and . . . (inaudible) . . . this is good for SaskTel? Not a single one, Mr. Speaker.

Yet poll after poll talks about SaskTel being one of the best companies in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, one of the best telephone companies in Canada and North America. But what do these folks in the opposition do, Mr. Speaker? They focus on the individual losses, Mr. Speaker.

The point is you need to look at these as an investment portfolio, Mr. Speaker. All of these investments have net worth and benefit for the people of Saskatchewan, something in excess of \$100 million. We think that's good news, Mr. Speaker, not bad news.

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

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

### Education Property Tax

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier ran for the leadership of the NDP, he promised to lower the education portion of property taxes, by increasing the province's share of K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) funding.

Last month, he went to a SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention and told them the status quo was not on, said it a number of times to them, Mr. Speaker. And last fall during the election campaign, that same Premier said he had room to accept the recommendations of the Boughen Commission within his budget. Three times he promised to deal with the property tax issue and has done absolutely nothing.

Mr. Speaker, why has the Premier broken his promise to reduce the education portion of property taxes?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister responsible for Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and we welcome the question from the member opposite. The government, Mr. Speaker, realizes that individuals earning their living off of farming or ranching in this province are having a difficult time during the lower commodity prices, BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), drought. We realize that income in farm country in Saskatchewan is in a very difficult circumstance, Mr. Speaker.

We also realize that delegates from Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities are meeting today to discuss the issue of education property tax and the effect that they're having on their local ability to pay bills or pay taxes as well. We welcome the debate that's taking place over at the Centre of the Arts today, Mr. Speaker, and we hope there are some constructive solutions provided to us as this day concludes.

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

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, SARM has the solution to the problem — back up the promises you made in the last two elections.

Mr. Speaker, the minister to a degree is right. Farmers have to deal with the BSE problem. They have a drought problem in Saskatchewan. Local ag reps are being fired. Rural hospitals are going to be closed. Farm family members' parents are going to be kicked out of long-term care homes.

Mr. Speaker, how much more does this government think farm families can take? They're at the end of their limit, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when will the Premier back up his promises and help cut down the education tax on property?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I realize if the member from Melville-Saltcoats wants to debate the whole issue of support for rural Saskatchewan, we're ready for that debate any day, Mr. Speaker.

But the issue today, Mr. Speaker, is certainly the whole idea of support for education and the reduction of property tax, and the Boughen report suggested a very simple solution, Mr. Speaker. Cut a cheque for 200 million. If the members opposite are willing to support us in — who knows? — a deficit budget or something else related to \$200 million, I'm sure we're prepared to consider any suggestion like that.

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

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: we do not only want to debate these issues, we want to find solutions for these issues.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — That government has made promise after promise after promise. For 12 years under that NDP government, the farmer's share of education tax on property has gone up and up and up — in fact from 40/60 to 70/30. Debating is not going to answer the problem here; finding solutions will.

SARM has a meeting today with the hall full at Centennial Auditorium over here, Centre of the Arts, and they want solutions from this government. They're even going so far as to think about breaking the law of the land to try and get a solution.

Mr. Speaker, how long before this government backs up its promises from the '99 election and the last election? Help farm families in this province before they go under.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's one thing to listen to the member from Melville-Saltcoats in the Chamber; it's another thing to listen to him when he speaks outside the Chamber. I have the newspaper report from *The Four-Town Journal* of March 17, 2004, in which the member was speaking to his local riding association, Mr. Speaker, and the reporter writes, and I quote . . . I quote the member from Melville-Saltcoats:

The Sask. Party is firmly opposed to increasing taxes, and would have no choice but to block any provincial sales tax increase . . . even though it may mean the retention of the education tax on agricultural property, at a time (when) farmers badly need tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, he said, "It puts us in a precarious position." Mr. Speaker, I suggest that the member speaking to his riding association understands that there are trade-offs when we're dealing with these issues. This government is committed to dealing with the issue of education property tax on farm land as we have said, and we will do that, Mr. Speaker, when we are fiscally able.

**The Speaker:** — The member's time has elapsed.

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

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

#### Crown Corporations' Business Investments

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House, the Saskatchewan Party believes that there is no trading off when it comes to telling the truth, when it comes to keeping your promises, Mr. Speaker. There's no trade-off there.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier has said on several occasions about this budget that it is all about choices. It's about choices, Mr. Speaker. Well the Premier apparently chose to risk and lose \$6 million in Nashville — in Nashville, Tennessee — instead of keeping his promise to hire more police officers in Saskatchewan. He chose to blow \$25 million on a telco in BC (British Columbia) instead of keeping his promises to lower the education portion of property tax. And he chose, Mr. Speaker, to blow \$27 million on a dot-com in Atlanta, Georgia, instead of keeping his promise — his promise with respect to long-term care beds and hospital closures in the province of Saskatchewan.

Question to the Premier is this: why are his priorities in Atlanta and in Nashville instead of the province of Saskatchewan?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I will talk to the Leader of the Opposition about choices. The choices that this government have made in this budget is a choice to support the health care and the medicare for Saskatchewan people, number one. It is a choice to support education in our province. It is a choice to support our municipalities through increased funding, Mr. Speaker. These are the choices that represent the priorities of Saskatchewan people.

And while we're at it, Mr. Speaker, we are going to provide for those choices. We're going to provide revenues to the people of Saskatchewan for their health and their education, for their municipalities through the continued public ownership and continued success of our Crown corporations.

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

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, in a very, very lame defence, in a very lame defence of the fact that the Premier has consistently broke his promises that were made during the provincial election, his very, very lame defence for the reasons that he would do something so severe as to systematically break the promises he solemnly made to the people of the province in the general election, his excuses have been — lame as they are — that there is no money, notwithstanding the fact that he's turned a Romanow surplus into his own very large deficit in the province of Saskatchewan.

Notwithstanding that fact, today we brought before this Legislative Assembly evidence, clear evidence that this government's priorities are with places like Nashville and Atlanta and BC, that this government is willing to risk and lose \$60 million and then look people in the eye and say we can't keep our promises because we have no money.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain to this House and to the people of the province how in the world he could break promises with the excuse that he has no money, at the same time that he's prepared to lose \$60 million outside our country and province, Mr. Speaker.

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

(14:15)

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, we hear, we hear the carping of the Leader of the Opposition, as we heard the carping of the former leader of the opposition. Do we hear one positive, one positive solution or suggestion for dealing with the challenges facing Saskatchewan people? Not a one. Is it any wonder they got a policy platform that's an absolute blank sheet. That's what they've got for policy — an absolute blank sheet.

The sheet is not blank here, Mr. Speaker. The sheet is very precise. We are going to responsibly provide for the health care of Saskatchewan people. We're going to responsibly provide for the education of Saskatchewan young people and make this a province welcoming to Saskatchewan young people. We're going to work with our partners in municipal government. We're going to work with our partners in health care. And we're going to work with that great tool of Saskatchewan's economy — the Crown corporate sector.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition to stand in this House today, stand for once and declare where is he on the ownership of SaskTel; where is he on the ownership of SaskPower; where is he on the ownership of SaskEnergy. It's time we heard something more than the carping from members opposite.

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

## INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

### Bill No. 35 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister responsible for Crown Investments Corporation.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 35, The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the minister responsible for the Crown Management Board that Bill No. 35, The Crown Corporations 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:** — The motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First reading of this Bill.

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — 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. 36 — The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax 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:** — The motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First reading of this Bill.

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — 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. 37 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2004

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 37, The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 37, The Tobacco Tax 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:** — The motion is carried.

**Deputy Clerk:** — First reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — And when shall this Bill be read a second time?

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Next sitting, 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 convert written questions for debates returnable no. 179 through 193 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Questions no. 179 to 193 inclusive have been converted to orders for return (debatable).

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### SECOND READINGS

#### **Bill No. 30 — The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine**

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, the Queen's Bench mediation program was introduced in 1995 in response to recommendations by the Canadian Bar Association task force on civil justice reform that a collaborative dispute resolution mechanism be provided early in any court process. The Queen's Bench Act, 1998 provides that mediation is mandatory after the close of pleadings and before taking any further step in the action or the matter for all civil, non-family cases.

At the request of Saskatchewan Justice, an independent consultant evaluated the program to determine to what extent it's meeting the needs of the people of Saskatchewan, to assess the impact of the mandatory mediation program on civil litigation practice in the province, and to determine the efficiency of the program. This evaluation involved discussion with client users and with members of the bar and judiciary, as well as a review of available program statistics.

The report on the program was submitted to Saskatchewan Justice in May 2003. In general the report indicates the program is reaching its goals in most cases, and that there is widespread support for both its universal nature and the timing and mediation in the early stages of litigation.

A theme that emerged in evaluation is that the program should incorporate more flexibility respecting various components — in particular, flexibility regarding timing, exemptions,

postponements, and in some cases what constitutes attendance at a mediation session.

The proposed amendments allow for more flexibility to accommodate the diverse nature of the cases that are mediated. In addition, allowing the director to postpone the mediation session addresses lawyers' concerns that they have to apply to the court to postpone mediation, even in cases where it is clear the mediation session will be more productive at a later stage in the proceeding.

The evaluation indicated that the problem with the design of the present program is that some cases proceed to mediation with insufficient preparation, perhaps with little or no exchange of materials in advance of mediation. The report recommends that mediation should continue to take place early in the litigation process. However it also suggests that parties should file their statement as to documents before mediation on the basis the exchange of relevant information about mediation will, in many cases, enhance the process.

The report also recommends that courts should be able to direct parties back to mediation later in the process if, in the judge's opinion, this would be useful.

The proposed amendments to the Act respond to the recommendations of the report. In the case of the timing of mediation, the proposal gives flexibility for the director to postpone the mediation session until after the parties have exchanged documents. This responds to the comments of some consultees that the mediation should continue to occur as soon as possible. However it also allows flexibility for a later mediation in a case where documents are crucial to the party's case or a more productive mediation will occur after exchange of documents.

Other amendments will clarify the authority of the director of the dispute resolution office to grant exemptions and postponements, and will allow the court to award costs against the party that does not comply with the mediation requirement.

Consumers of the mediation program were consulted during the evaluation program with respect to the proposed amendments. Consultees have expressed support for the program and for the proposed changes to it.

I'm confident that these amendments will enhance the effectiveness of the mediation process for parties in civil litigation in this province, and I am pleased to move second reading of An Act to amend the Queen's Bench Act, 1998.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 30, The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise in the House and speak on Bill No. 30, An Act to amend the Queen's Bench Act.

This gives a manager of the disputes resolution office power to postpone and grant exemptions to mediation process or to file a certificate of non-compliance to the court as the minister mentioned, and it also allows the court to order costs for non-compliance.

Mr. Speaker, in general the fact that outside consultants had been directed to give direction on this and that they have returned to do so in such, from the overall position of the opposition, I don't think that we have major problems with this, though I know that the critic will be speaking to this at a later date — the member from Saskatoon Southeast.

One of the things the amendments give are new powers and responsibilities to the director of dispute resolution office, who in legislation is the manager of mediation services. So in essence, Mr. Speaker, it is an expansion of those managerial duties, and this new subsection (1) includes this definition. It continues to be a requirement for mediation to occur after the close of pleadings in every non-familial civil proceeding. And, Mr. Speaker, I guess that the managerial powers being expanded to meet this will only aid in that process.

Subsection (1.2) is moved from the regulations to the Act. This allows the court to postpone mediation to allow for the exchange of documents and examinations.

And that point, Mr. Speaker, subsection (1.3) seems to be mostly a logistical avenue to allow necessary documents for court cases to proceed so that both parties can have all the proper information to be able to make their cases in a timely manner and in a thorough manner with all the information required so that in the putting together of their arguments and their case, both sides have shared access to all the relevant materials. So section (1.3) obviously serves some sort of pragmatic purpose, which we're happy that that occurs.

Subsection (1.4) allows the manager to grant exemptions to the mediation process. Mr. Speaker, I can't assume to speculate on what type of exemptions these must be, not having a formal training in the law or being a member of the bar association, but it would seem to me that with the consultation process which has happened with the Saskatchewan bar association, these exemptions obviously will serve a purpose and possibly allow for a smoother following of the procedures.

Subsection (1.5) clarifies that face-to-face mediation is preferable, but under exceptional circumstances conference calls may be permitted. Mr. Speaker, this section again is just somewhat updating for purposes of logistics, possibly geographical realities. If you had two parties which were physically, geographically very distant, perhaps conference calls could suffice. There may be other situations which require this type of bridge, Mr. Speaker. So it seems that again subsection (1.5) provides a pragmatic answer to situations that may face litigators and barristers when they are proceeding with these type of cases.

If non-attendance by a party, under subsection (3) will allow the mediator on his or her own initiative to file a certificate of non-compliance with the court to advise the court that meditation did not occur — well prior to this, Mr. Speaker — the amendment . . . a party requests the mediator to file the

certificate of non-attendance. And obviously this is something that through the consultation process had been requested and if it is serving a pragmatic purpose it would make sense that it is rightly being included.

A certificate of non-completion is changed to certificate of compliance or non-compliance, and this provides more flexibility to recognize that a party may not physically attend mediation but that the action had still been complied with if they have a representative attend for them, such as a party's insurer. I'm not exactly sure, Mr. Speaker, how often such a situation will come up, but I suppose once would be enough to have us look at this important matter, and the new clause 5(b) allows the court to order costs where a party did not comply with a requirement for mediation as consequence for failing to attend.

This, Mr. Speaker, seems to be a situation that I personally . . . looks like we could be in agreement with, if individuals involved in litigation are forced to go forth and pay lawyers and possibly other professionals working on their case, to sit down for mediation to make a smoother process occur and the other party fails to show, it would only seem fair, Mr. Speaker, that costs be afforded to the party that shows up because they have to bear it one way or the other, yet they fail to be at fault when the other party doesn't show up.

And if a further meeting needs to be questioned or more than one meeting needs to be questioned, Mr. Speaker, they could be billed for the same services time and again, and also all the intermittent services, just setting appointments up. Having had many dealings with legal firms, I can tell you that scheduling sometimes is a very expensive process in and of itself.

Bill No. 30 as I'm going through it here, it is cited as The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004 and was last before this House in 1998. Section (42) of The Queen's Bench Act, 1998 was amended in the manner set forth in this section:

**Subsection (1) is repealed and the following substituted:**

“(1) In this section, ‘**manager**’ means that a manager of mediation services appointed pursuant to section 14.1 of *The Department of Justice Act*.

“(1.1) Subject to subsections (1.2), (1.3), (1.4) and (7), after the close of pleadings in a contested action or matter that is not a family law proceeding, the local registrar shall arrange for a mediation session, and the parties shall attend the mediation session before taking any further . . . (steps) in the action or matter.

Mr. Speaker, this particular Bill and other Bills which I will be speaking on today really come to the highlight of this government's agenda. I don't know how the province of Saskatchewan would have the ability to be going forward without this particular aspect of (1.2). On application by party to action or matter the court may exempt the parties from the requirement to attend a mediation session; or (b) postpone the requirement to attend a mediation session until a later step in the action or matter on any terms that the court considers appropriate.

(14:30)

Well, I know that, Mr. Speaker, during the November election the people of Kindersley were very interested that I be speaking on this specific subsection, knowing that their tax dollars would be well used in the legislative process so that Bill No. 30, An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act could be brought before the House and debated in such a democratic way.

Subsection (1.4). At the request of a party to an action or matter, the manager may exempt the parties from the requirements to attend a mediation session. Unless excused by the manager, (under section (1.5)), the parties shall appear in person at the first mediation session and at any subsequent mediation session.

Mr. Speaker, on Bill No. 30 . . . I hear the member from Regina Elphinstone quoting, and as I believe, this is such a waste of time. That may be a reflection of his opinion of my oratorical skills. And for that, him being a senior member of this House, I would give my humble apologies that I'm not making a more fruitful and enjoyable presentation palatable to the ear canal. However, I'm doing the best I can, Mr. Speaker, with the material put forth from this government.

This government feels that . . . important in the actions of the day, that An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act. I agreed with most of the points that the minister had brought before the Assembly today, and I recognize that in the democratic process, Mr. Speaker, all members of this House have the right to speak on the Bills that come before this House.

When the Bills come before this House it's obviously the direction of the government which Bills they choose, and the importance of drafting the direction that they feel that this province should go down. And I would commend the government on bringing forth Bill No. 30, An Act to amend The Queen's Bench Act. I know that during the election campaign few could sleep at night without really knowing the ins and outs of what was going to be determined here.

Amendments give new powers and responsibilities to the director of the dispute resolution office who in legislation is the manager. The extension of the managerial powers in this instance, Mr. Speaker, seems to be something that will pragmatically increase the ability to use the dispute resolution office. If we're using these things, Mr. Speaker, in civil litigation and it is preventing the clogging of the courts and it is getting better results in non-family civil litigation, mediated results, results hopefully where you can have win-win situations between the parties. That has to be a good thing and possibly even overdue.

As I said, this was last looked at in 1998, so we're a number of years further along than that. And these type of amendments that the minister asked . . . or commented on today are in the need to be discussed.

Again subsection (1.2) is moved from the regulations to the Act. And it allows the court to postpone the mediation session or exempt the parties from the requirement to mediate. This, Mr. Speaker, could be very important in the event of any set . . . certain situations where one party may not be able to be present

due to a death in the family, severe illness, whatever the cause may be, Mr. Speaker. It's good that this is included and it's further good that it's included that for some reason under civil litigation that one party may be exempted altogether. I'm sure that there are pragmatic reasons, again, for this situation.

Subsection (1.3) allows the manager of the dispute resolution office to postpone mediation to also allow for the exchange of documents or examinations. Again the exchange of documents, Mr. Speaker, this is exceedingly necessary in mediation to have a win-win situation. It prevents the wasting of time so that both sides can have the whole story before them.

I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, on speaking on Bill 30 that the government is able to have the whole story told before them, that the opposition has the right to respond. It seems somewhat confusing that with the introduction of this Bill, only the minister will be speaking to it, I assume, from that side of the House, although there are 58 of us.

And a Bill such as this affects the Department of Justice, which affects all of our constituents and yet many persons — especially on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker — don't seem to feel the need to speak to Bill No. 30 or examine it at any extent, and the ramifications that it could have on their constituents. And that truly, Mr. Speaker, has . . . is lamentable.

Subsection (1.4), as we're going back through this, allows the manager again to grant exemptions to the mediation process . . . I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, I think I've already covered that. My apologies, I'll go forth to section (1.5).

This clarifies that face-to-face mediation is preferable but under exceptional circumstances, conference calls may be permitted. I think that I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, that calling may have some advantages if there are situations of geographical disparity preventing the two parties from meeting on the day. We could see this being very beneficial with the exceptional weather that we sometimes have in Saskatchewan in the wintertime. Many rural area and possibly urban areas . . . rural persons being forced to commute in to a common locale to be able to discuss and mediate in these type of proceedings, that perhaps this could be better served with the telephone. If this is the case, we would be favourable to subsection (1.5).

I mentioned before, Mr. Speaker, that if non-attendance by a party — subsection (3) — will allow the mediator on his or her own initiative to file a certificate of non-compliance with the court to advise the court that mediation did not occur. And prior to this amendment, a party requests the mediator to file the certificate of non-attendance.

So this, as I am understanding it, would allow one party to file non-attendance as opposed to the mediator themselves having to do it. And I suppose an individual that shows up at a meeting would be fully aware if the other party did not attend or not and that it would be upon them to want to file about non-attendance of the other party, especially in this situation with the new clause 5(b) that allows, that allows for costs to possibly be ordered against that.

Mr. Speaker, I can see from the Assembly and the attention that I've riveted from all members, that section . . . Bill No. 30 —

and I'm not going to attempt to read it in French, Mr. Speaker, for the betterment of all our cranial capacities — that Bill No. 30 be now amended . . . or be now adjourned, rather.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on second reading of Bill No. 30, The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

**Bill No. 31 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004**

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading on The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004. The purpose of this Act is to repeal five statutes that are no longer required. Mr. Speaker, I'll briefly describe each of the statutes being repealed.

Mr. Speaker, The Co-operative Guarantee Act came into force following the end of World War II. Its purpose was to assist emerging agricultural co-operatives to obtain financing through a government guarantee of loans made through approved lenders. The Co-operative Guarantee Act is no longer being used, Mr. Speaker. The last application approved under the legislation was in the 1980s. There are no outstanding loan guarantees. Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, the legislation is no longer required as the Department of Industry and Resources has the ability to provide loan guarantees under other legislation if need be.

The second Act being repealed, Mr. Speaker, is The Hearing Aid Act. The Act came into force more than 25 years ago. It provided the authority for the minister of Health to establish a department-run hearing aid program. With the changes to the health system in the 1990s, Mr. Speaker, it was decided the hearing aid program should be delivered by the two larger health districts, now the two larger health regions. The accountability arrangements between the Department of Health and the health regions are governed by The Regional Health Services Act; therefore The Hearing Aid Act is no longer required.

Third, IPSCO Inc. and United Steelworkers of America, Local 5890, Collective Bargaining Agreement Act governs the terms of a collective bargaining agreement which ended in 2002. Mr. Speaker, The Trade Union Act permits a collective bargaining agreement of a three-year duration. IPSCO and the union negotiated a four-year agreement and jointly asked for this legislation ensuring that their agreement would not be invalid. Because the agreement has now expired, the legislation is no longer required.

Fourth, The Potash Resources Act was created in 1987 to provide for the management, conservation, and orderly development of Saskatchewan's potash resources. It was

intended to provide stability to the potash industry during a period of excess productive capacity worldwide. Mr. Speaker, conditions improved for the potash industry and a proclamation of The Potash Resources Act was not required. The industry remains healthy and consequently there is no need for the legislation.

Fifth, The Pulp and Paper Mills Act was passed in 1986 in order to provide authority for the Government of Saskatchewan to guarantee part of a debt relating to the establishment of a paper mill at Prince Albert. The guarantee was removed in the 1992-1993 fiscal year. There are no outstanding guarantees under the Act and the Act has no ongoing purpose. Therefore it is appropriate that The Pulp and Paper Mills Act be repealed.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of An Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete Statutes.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 31, The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004 be now read a second time.

I recognize the member for Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back by popular demand to speak on Bill No. 31, I'd like to dedicate my formal remarks today to the member from Regina Dewdney who asked to hear what interesting things could be brought about by this. Well essentially, Mr. Speaker, An Act to repeal miscellaneous obsolete Statutes, this does repeal The Co-operative Guarantee Act, The Hearing Aid Act, IPSCO and United Steelworkers collective bargaining agreement, potash resources Act, and The Pulp and Paper Mills Act.

Each of these individually as documents, Mr. Speaker, I can tell you would make for fascinating reading either at the cottage or just a night if you're trying to fall asleep. These are mainly housekeeping but they should find out . . . (inaudible) . . . regulatory plans for hearing aids.

The Co-operative Guarantee Act — the government guaranteed loans to Saskatchewan co-operative society limited and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Financial Services Ltd. upon application to the minister. And we know, Mr. Speaker, we have a strong, we have a strong background in rural Saskatchewan through the co-op movement with credit unions, Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, and our co-op grocery stores and lumber yards and whatnot, and I know that my family has been strong supporters of that movement.

The very reason that, Mr. Speaker, that the co-op movement has been strong is specifically because it had the situation of being completely voluntary. Individuals could join if they wished; they could also participate in the commerce of the store without having to join. And it has been and remains to be a good thing for Saskatchewan and I would say rural Saskatchewan in particular.

There are many, many small, small communities where these services are all that's left in the town and I'm thinking in my own riding of Hoosier where they have a co-op gas bar and a



grocery store combined and it serves a great geographical area. And we know that in the past these have served Saskatchewan well and we would hope that they will do so in the future.

Mr. Speaker, with regards to The Hearing Aid Act which is now being repealed, provisions for . . . This allows for provisions for a government or did allow for provisions for a government administrative program to obtain hearing aids and to pay audiologists employed by this program under the Department of Health.

People who received services under this Act had to have Saskatchewan health and people who were not permanent residents could not receive from this program. Although currently hearing health services are provided to Saskatchewan residents, they must pay for the hearing test and hearing aid fittings. And hearing aids are sold at reasonable costs through Saskatchewan Health program both in Regina and Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, hearing aids are also available by private vendors. And currently there are no regulations in place to monitor private members and protect seniors — given that the majority of the clients for hearing aids are seniors. And it would be our hope on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that those protections be put in place at some time so that . . . hopefully it won't happen, but unscrupulous dealers in an otherwise sound industry which provides a great service would not take advantage of the least, of the least able to defend themselves in our society, and that being the seniors.

(14:45)

We believe on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that seniors deserve the dignity of their retirement, and that they should live in a way that allows them that dignity, with the best of health and the best of health care that can be provided for them.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill No. 31, an Act to repeal miscellaneous and obsolete statutes, also repeals the IPSCO incorporation and the United Steel Workers of America, local 5890 collective bargaining agreement, and this isn't in the current statutes. Similarly, The Potash Resources Act is not in the current statutes.

And The Pulp and Paper Mills Act, An Act respecting the sale of assets of Prince Albert Pulp Company Ltd. and Sask Forest Products Corporation, and the establishment of a paper mill in Saskatchewan this, Mr. Speaker, is also a part of this pulp and paper mills Act which is being repealed. The government has guaranteed debt incurred by Weyerhaeuser, and we would of course question the motivation and return on investment with that. However that really becomes a secondary issue relative to the Act, as it is put forth here, in and of itself.

Mr. Speaker, The Hearing Aid Act — as I can now go to the Act in its entirety — is An Act representing the Establishment of a Program to provide Hearing Aids to certain Persons with Defective Hearing. And this Act was in the past cited as The Hearing Aid Act and in the Act, hearing aid referred specifically to:

. . . an instrument or device designed or manufactured for the purpose of aiding, or compensating for any deficiency

of the hearing capacity of persons and includes any part or accessory for the instrument or device . . .

Subsection 2(b), the minister of course referred to the minister of Health, and the resident means the person who was legally entitled to remain in Canada, who made their home and was ordinarily present in Saskatchewan “or any other person declared by the Lieutenant Governor in Council to be a resident within the meaning of this Act.”

Obviously, Mr. Speaker, this section was included to provide by the Government of Saskatchewan for residents of Saskatchewan, as should be the case. And it doesn't seem the repeal of this section, or this Act as a whole, that should really change with regards to provisions of the future for the citizens of the province. If they are of the province, they should be allowed the amenities provided by the provincial government. But it doesn't mean to say, Mr. Speaker, that amenities should necessarily be provided to persons who don't regularly reside here or are only here for a short time. These specific regulations are important and remain important to allow for the operation of legislation when it gets into practice on the ground.

There was a power as well of the minister to establish a program to obtain hearing aids, and the minister could have established a program with the Department of Health for obtaining hearing aids. And I believe that this Act did come into effect and such programs were available. And these programs have largely now been replaced, so it's not really, really problematic on this side of the House that this particular Act is being brought up.

As we said, the repealing of this Act — there was eligibility questions, regulation questions. And under the old regulation questions, Mr. Speaker, it didn't really have anything with regards to regulations surrounding the vendors of such hearing aids. And as I said before, we would always have concern for senior citizens if there were unscrupulous providers of below par equipment or fly-by-night organizations that may come into a small community and hold a clinic, provide hearing aids at a great, great cost to seniors, and then they are gone overnight, leaving merchandise which doesn't work properly or doesn't have the proper support networks.

And you have seniors, often on fixed incomes, which may not be able to, aside from having the disability of not being able to hear 100 per cent, possibly being . . . having restrictions on their income. And having a double whammy like this, it really could be heartbreaking to a senior and cause them additional stress. And it is a place that the government would be wise to have regulations on, or at least clarify for the industry as a whole right now. And I hope that with the repeal of this Act that that important issues in and of itself will still be, will still be considered and recognized.

There are a few other questions that come up with that, such as, are hearing aids subsidized by Sask Health? Is it keeping the cost down? And with the hearing aids that are being provided, as there are private sector vendors providing them as well, what is being done to keep the cost down to allow for the most provision to the most number of persons? Are they being contracted out? Is there a bidding process? How is it determined which possible brands are being utilized? Do patients have a

choice in this? These are matters which I'm sure do affect seniors and that the repeal of this Act will have a direct bearing on.

I have some notes here, Mr. Speaker, from Saskatchewan Health with regards to coverage and the hearing of health services, the hearing aid plan. Audiology services such as hearing tests, hearing loss prevention programs, counselling, public education, and hearing aid fittings are available to Saskatchewan residents of all ages. You're responsible however, Mr. Speaker, for paying the hearing test and hearing aid fitting fees. And it becomes questionable again whether the bearing of these costs was listing . . . was linked . . . whether or not the bearing of these costs used to be covered in the old program which the old Act used follow, or has it always been the case that the fittings and the hearing test fee have always had a charge to them.

This is something, Mr. Speaker, that I know I can see from the Legislative Assembly and my hon. colleagues assembled here today is pressing on their minds. Hearing aids and accessories are sold and repaired at reasonable cost if the ones provided through Sask Health . . . Who bears the cost on these? What are the warranties? This sort of thing. And, Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 31 repeals this directly and it . . . that was one of the questions that needed to be raised about it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your attention on this important Bill and having the pleasure of having been able to speak to it today. And I move that this Bill be now adjourned.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on second reading of Bill No. 31, miscellaneous statutes repeal Act, 2004 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 24

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 24 — The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I respond to Bill 24, An Act to amend The Provincial Court Act. I hope that I can speak with the eloquence of my colleague, the member from Kindersley, as he did on the two previous Bills.

The purpose of this Bill is to clearly define the types of benefits available to judges. After careful analysis, I've discerned that there's three main parts to this Bill. It addresses COLA, the cost-of-living adjustment, and puts it into legislation, Mr. Speaker, which is an important point which I will address later; and also complying with the federal laws, updating the provincial law to comply with the federal laws; and amending some regulations. — so three parts that each need scrutiny on behalf of all members of this legislature.

I've taken the time to examine the Bill, and I must admit it's been a learning experience for me. Every day in this House, Mr. Speaker, every week in this House has been a learning experience for me, and addressing this Bill I've learned a few things as well.

Dealing with the cost-of-living allowance, I didn't know that it's been done on an ad hoc basis for the last 30 years — that surprised me very much, Mr. Speaker — by an NDP government who has been in government for a large part of the last 30 years. They purport to be a friend of public employees, a friend of the working person. Yet they've been doing this on an ad hoc basis for 30 years.

You know, they dangle the carrot in front of the working people. They've given the COLA agreement to some groups and not to others. One year it's given. One year it's not. It's not a good way to treat an employee in my opinion, Mr. Speaker. Members opposite may disagree, but in my opinion that is not a way to treat an employee.

It's just like employees who were hired on to this government a couple of years ago. They were given the promise that there was a role for them within this government, and now two years later they've been given pink slips. They've been told that this government can't manage its finances properly, and they no longer have the wherewithal to employ these people.

I'm just very surprised that a government that purports to be the friend of labour, that that's the way that they've been doing it. That being said, Mr. Speaker, this is a good idea, but it comes probably 30 years too late.

Unfortunately that's the way we've seen things happen with this government. They have some good ideas, but they bring them in way too late. They take their sweet time with things. Whether it's building high schools or bringing in pension legislation, this government takes their time. They often wait for a crisis. As can be seen later on in the legislation here, they wait for a crisis. When a crisis happens, then they act. It's just crisis management, as the member from Watrous . . . or the member from Humboldt has said. It's crisis management.

You know, just look at the promise of hiring 200 more police officers. That promise was made in 1999. It was made again in 2003. And we saw the ramifications today in question period of not honouring that promise, or of delaying it. Members opposite say that they will eventually fulfill that promise. Well eventually is not good enough, just taking too much time to enact that legislation. It's just troubling I guess for people across Saskatchewan, certainly for members on this side of the House.

The second substantial area of this Bill is complying with federal laws. And that's really the meat, the substantial part of the Bill here. So I'd like to just examine it clause by clause. And granted there's not a lot of controversy in many of these areas, but I'd just like to . . . I think it behooves us to do that.

Section 28 . . . Clause 28, section (1):

Subject to the section, every judge shall, by reservation from his or her salary, contribute to the fund . . . amount equal to 5% of the judge's annual salary.

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's fairly straightforward. It sets out what the deductions will be, and I think it's a fair way of doing it. You know, 5 per cent is certainly something that will be very well received, I believe, by judges in Saskatchewan.

Subsection (1) does not apply to a judge who (is) elected to receive . . . annuity benefits to which the judge was entitled pursuant to *The Magistrates' Courts Act*.

Again fairly straightforward, if a judge chooses to take an annuity instead of a defined benefit from his pension, that would be his choice, and it wouldn't apply in this specific circumstance.

The third section, the third section here:

No judge shall make a contribution for more than 23 1/3 years.

Not quite sure why the 23 and a third years has been chosen. And we look forward to asking questions in committee to why this would . . . this time frame has been chosen. I can only speculate, Mr. Speaker, that because the career of a judge is shorter than your average career, because it takes 10 years as a lawyer before you're eligible to become a judge, maybe that that's one way of looking at it. I'm not sure and maybe other members would know.

Fourth clause:

A judge who is granted a leave of absence may continue to make contributions to the fund in accordance with subsection (1), as if the judge were receiving . . . (a) salary the judge would have been entitled to receive if he or she . . . (was) not on a leave of absence.

And I personally believe, Mr. Speaker, that that's part of granting a leave of absence, that you don't penalize a person. We certainly encourage people to take leaves of absence, whether it's sabbatical or something like that, that enhances their career opportunities.

A judge who is receiving a disability allowance pursuant to section 20 shall, by reservation from the allowance, continue to make contributions to the fund in accordance with subsection (1), as . . . (a) judge were receiving . . . salary the judge would have been entitled to receive if he or she . . . (is) not incapacitated.

Again I think this is just HR policy, human resources policy of the 21st century, that if any employee including a judge

becomes incapacitated in some way, that they are still able to contribute to the fund, and it will not affect their pension.

Again on a similar note:

Where a judge makes . . . (a contribution) pursuant to . . . (section) (4) or (5), the judge is deemed to have served continuously as a judge for that period of contributory service.

Again if the judge decides to take a sabbatical . . . And, Mr. Speaker, you well know that we've been fortunate in Saskatchewan. We have many judges that have rose to national and international prominence. I just mention the name of Judge Clarence Estey. He has done Saskatchewan proud; he has served well on the federal court, and indeed we have the Estey centre of law in Saskatchewan.

(15:00)

So we encourage judges to follow in the steps of Clarence Estey and take sabbaticals. And they can rest assured that their service will continue to compute, and they will be able to not suffer any type of a penalty.

Again, clause:

(7) Where a judge has, in a year, made contributions to the fund that exceed, the aggregate, the maximum contributions prescribed by the *Income Tax Act* . . . with respect to a judge for that year, the amount of excess contribution shall be refunded to the judge.

Well certainly, Mr. Speaker, there's minimums and maximums that are set out in the Income Tax Act. I just can't understand why this NDP government would take excess contributions away from employees, whether they're judges or otherwise. Why take that money and now be forced to give it back? It just doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker.

It also says:

where contributions by a judge exceed the maximum contribution level under the Income Tax Act . . . the excess contributions will be refunded in order to avoid (and this Mr. Speaker, I think is why this legislation was brought forward, in order to avoid) revocation of the registration of the . . . plan.

So in other words, this plan would be revoked if the change wasn't made.

Again, Mr. Speaker, this is an example of crisis management, of not enacting anything until a crisis has to happen. Here we go. You know, the government was forced to change its ways. It didn't do so solely on its own behalf. This is, or should be, somewhat of an embarrassment to this government. Waiting for a crisis, waiting for a crisis to happen, the crisis happens, and then react — it's a situation that we've seen all too often, Mr. Speaker.

Again overall we agree with the premise of this Bill; the subsections of it seem to make a lot of sense. We think it's

something that should have happened long ago.

There's two main clauses . . . again just to summarize. If the cost of living increases are provided to the pensions of retired civil servants, it will also be given to judges, where pensions . . . who have retired prior to April 1, 2003 and their survivors. Such increases shall not exceed the consumer price indexes.

We think that's fair and that's reasonable. The amount that the judge is able to contribute — I touched on this a little bit earlier — 5 per cent, you know, I think it's generous, but it's not certainly out of whack . . . should not exceed the maximum contribution of the Income Tax Act. Contributions made during a leave of absence may be longer than the time allowed by the Income Tax Act. For contributions by a judge exceed the maximum contribution allowable under The Income Tax Act, the excess contributions will be refunded.

To summarize again, we think it's fair and reasonable. But again, Mr. Speaker, we need to take a closer look at this within committee, and I look forward to examining this in the Committee of Human Services which I am a part of. We need to compare the pensions to other jurisdictions to assure that they are fair and appropriate and that they are in sync, if you like, with other jurisdictions across the country. And they must also be reasonable and reflect the cost of living in our province.

Also, Mr. Speaker, because this pertains to judges and the justice system . . . and we all know the justice system in Saskatchewan has been under severe scrutiny lately. It's partly due to cases like the Klassen case. And it's our hope and expectation that this will, this Bill will enable judicial independence. When it comes to remuneration and other matters pertaining to the Justice department, we think that an impartial look at things is very important, and we see the probability of that here, and we hope that that is indeed the case.

We must also ensure that methodologies that are used to arrive remuneration levels and benefits are done in an impartial manner. Again, there has to be some leeway given. When we look at this, we have to believe that that will be indeed the case. And we think it will be.

But, Mr. Speaker, due to the financial constraints of our province, we need to ensure that the due diligence is done on each and every Bill, and certainly on this one where it provides remuneration for judges in Saskatchewan. Judges . . . like anybody else, we like to retain our judges. We want to keep our very best employees in Saskatchewan, and we have to provide them with the remuneration necessary to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you in conclusion that members on this side of the House, we will do our part to contribute to that due diligence. We come into this House and we provide a scrutiny of this government, but we will do so in regard to this Bill, provide our own due diligence as well.

At this point, Mr. Speaker, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 24, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Saskatoon Silver Springs that debate on second reading of Bill

No. 24 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

### Bill No. 25

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 25 — The Adoption Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'adoption** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak about Bill No. 25, The Adoption Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, adoption is an extremely important and sensitive program in our province, in our country, and indeed around the world because we're dealing with very vulnerable people — we're dealing with children first and foremost.

And I think that any kind of effort and comments that are made in regard to adoption always has to keep before us, when we make consideration of amendments or changes to Bills, we have to keep in front of us the fact that who we're dealing with, who we're speaking about are children who are very vulnerable members of our society. And the decisions we make, and the circumstances that we set up in regard to dealing with their lives and their futures are going to be so important because it has a great deal to do with shaping who and what they will become as adults.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting, I noted, that according to the Department of Vital Statistics there were 136 adoptions in Saskatchewan in 2002 as compared to 189 the year prior. The 136 also includes all out-of-province adoptions of persons born in Saskatchewan as well as adoptions for people born outside of the province. So, Mr. Speaker, it does affect 136 children. But it . . . indeed, it also has to by definition affect parents — both adopting parents and parents of the child that is being adopted.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments under this Act are I think well-intentioned. In reading the legislation and trying to understand what changes have been envisaged in this amendment, I am convinced that they're well-intentioned, and they have very clearly the best interests of all of the parties at heart when they are trying to make these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments make some changes in terms of creating an atmosphere where the birth father is also a part of the process and consideration about the determination of the future of the child that needs to be adopted. And I think that that is a proper decision to make, and I understand that it results from a Supreme Court decision that ruled that the birth mother cannot have absolute discretion because that would be a violation of the father's rights under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. And so there is an imperative created by the Supreme

Court of Canada if you like, that some of these changes to the adoptive Act have to be made. And I think what it does is it recognizes more balance.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes in the past in our legislation and our laws, and in rules and regulations set up in order to deal with some of these issues like adoption — I think right across Canada, and our province included — we maybe went too far in one direction and excluded the rights of other parties that have a legitimate stake and legitimate concerns in regard to the future of children.

And so I think that it is appropriate that the birth father as well as the birth mother have certain rights established under the law, and under these amendments, and that the process is one that can move forward in the most careful considered way possible.

We understand that there are going to be times where there still will be the opportunity for — I believe it's called a dispensation process — whereby the birth mother can make a case before the court to exclude the input from the birth father for various reasons that might include: safety, sexual assault, or stalling tactics, or disputes. And a judge would rule on the matter, taking into account the best interests of the child who's being adopted while keeping in mind that the Supreme Court has said that the birth father also has certain rights. And that the court has to then balance and weigh those rights in the best interest of the child.

Mr. Speaker, it's important that that is always our goal. You know, I think that certainly in our family there have been . . . is an example of an adopted child who fit in with the family. One of my very best friends in Melfort comes from an adopted background. And it was very interesting to see that at a certain time of his life he decided that it was important to him to seek out and try to establish a relationship with his birth mother. And there was a process that was available to him in order to do that. And they were able to reunite and establish a relationship when he was almost 50 years-of-age. And he really benefited from that, and I think his birth mother did as well.

So we have to, when we make these decisions, and we set in motion the process for a carefully considered adoption; we've got to make sure that we do it in a way that doesn't burn the bridges inappropriately. And that the child is able to, as they grow up, have the access to birth parents as well.

And so I think that the direction that this legislation, and other legislation pieces across Canada are moving, is very appropriate and very professional, and I think is going to prove in the long run to serve the best interests of all of the parties. And so I believe that, you know, from the reading of this Act, I think it's all right.

Mr. Speaker, not being a lawyer, when I noticed a grandfather clause I thought it meant people like yourself and myself that were the grampas and we were going to have some input into this legislation as well, and I understand that to my disappointment that that's not what it meant. It meant essentially that any situations that were established beforehand would be kept in place and that the new regulations wouldn't apply.

So to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to lodge my disappointment that the grandfathering didn't have application to grampas in particular, because I try to follow that and say this must mean me — but it didn't, Mr. Speaker. And so I lodge my disappointment.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important that there are other housekeeping amendments in this legislation that will further clarify and establish, as I said earlier, the balance of the rights of both the birth father and mother and safeguard the interests of the adopted child.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we want to consider these. There have been an indication that individuals want to express some comments to us about this legislation. And we certainly want to make sure that they have the opportunity to do that, Mr. Speaker. And so in order for them to provide that opportunity we will want to adjourn the debate.

But before I do that, Mr. Speaker, I note with interest that Bill No. 26 is very much the housekeeping work that is centred around this Bill. So in adjourning debate of this motion, I'll rise to speak very, very briefly on the next one because it is connected in terms of this legislation. And we will want these two Bills to stay together for consideration.

And so, Mr. Speaker, in order to have greater time for reflection and input on this Bill, I would like to comment that I think that this Bill puts a proper direction into adoption legislation. And at this time I would move to adjourn debate.

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

**The Speaker:** — I has been moved the member for Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill No. 25 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

### Bill No. 26

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Crofford that **Bill No. 26 — The Adoption Consequential Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, this Adoption Consequential Amendment Act really puts together the details and consequential amendments that are needed in order to fill out and take care of the implications of the changes in the previous Bill and the impact on other pieces of legislation. So it's very much in keeping with the same Bill and needs to move forward in a parallel vein with Bill No. 25.

So in order for that to happen, Mr. Speaker, at this time I move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Melfort that debate on second reading of Bill 26 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

(15:15)

### Bill No. 28

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 28 — The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise in the Assembly again this afternoon this time to speak on Bill No. 28, An Act to amend The Public Employees Pension Plan Act.

I'd like to start, Mr. Speaker, if I may, by going through the Act line by line so that the Assembly as a whole is clear as what we're speaking of. The short title:

**1** This Act may be cited as *The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2004*.

This supersedes the 1996 Act — The Public Employees Pension Plan Act, and it's amended in the manner set forth in this Act.

Section 2 is amended and:

#### **3 Clause 2(a) is repealed and the following substituted:**

“(a) (the) ‘**allocated investment earnings**’ means, with respect to the contributions made by or on behalf of a member, the amount calculated by the board, having regard to changes in the values of the assets of the fund and . . . revenue . . . other earnings accruing from the investment of the assets of the fund, and allocated for the purpose of determining the amount standing to the credit of a member.”

I think, Mr. Speaker, what this is referring to is that it's more clearly defining that the monies coming into the accounts are not merely interest from . . . as a bank account would bear interest, but they're in effect the return on the investment so the capital gains and/or losses, and that this is a good move and necessary for such detail to be available so that members who are recipients of the Public Employees Pension Plan can see where their money is at and how it's doing.

Section 3 is repealed and the following is substituted under:

#### **“Board**

**3(1)** The Public Employees Pension Board is continued.

The board shall . . . under section (2):

The board shall administer this Act.

and under section (3):

A person who was a member of the board immediately before the coming into force of this section ceases to be a member of the board on the coming into force of this section unless the person is reappointed pursuant to subsection (4) or (5).

Mr. Speaker, the board will consist of:

(a) the following persons who are appointed on behalf of employers:

one person appointed by the Public Service Commission;

one . . . appointed by SaskEnergy, SaskPower and SaskTel;

(iii) one person appointed by the Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Authority;

And under (iv), there will be a fourth person:

. . . appointed by the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation, the Workers' Compensation Board and the Saskatchewan Cancer Foundation.

And:

the following persons who are appointed on behalf of employees:

one person appointed by the Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union;

. . . (the second) person appointed by the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada;

(and) one person appointed by the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers . . .

And in this case it will be union 2067. One person will also be appointed, Mr. Speaker, by the Canadian Union of Public Employees Local 600. And finally, Mr. Speaker:

a chairperson appointed by the members of the board who are appointed pursuant to clauses (a) and (b).

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that that is abundantly clear where the new board is going to be made up of and where such persons will be derived from.

The Act goes on to state, on point (5):

If no appointment of a member pursuant to subclause

(4)(a)(ii), (iii) or (iv) is made within 60 days after the coming into force of this section or within 60 days after the occurrence of a vacancy, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall appoint the member.

Section (6), Mr. Speaker:

Subject to . . . (sections) (7), (8) and (9), a member of the board other than the chairperson (can):

- (a) . . . (hold) office for a period of four years; and
- (b) is eligible for reappointment, but is not eligible to hold office for more than two consecutive terms.

This is probably a good idea, Mr. Speaker. There's probably little as annoying as individuals sitting on boards or making speeches that go on ad nauseam.

Mr. Speaker, section (7):

The term of office of one-half of the first members of the board to be appointed pursuant to clauses (4)(a) and (b) after the . . . (come) into force of this section is two years.

If the entities that appoint members of the board are unable to agree amongst themselves which members of the board are to serve a two-year term pursuant to subsection (7), the board shall, at its first meeting after . . . coming into force of this section, select by lot the . . . (member) whose term of office is to be two years, . . . (altering) between members appointed on behalf of employers and members appointed on behalf of employees.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that subsection (8) here was able to clarify that point because I could see the problem which would arise in the event that you had a dispute amongst the appointees of the employers and the appointees of the employees themselves. And if they couldn't agree to start the committee meetings, how would anything ever get done, Mr. Speaker? So it's very thoughtful, Mr. Speaker, that subsection (8) has been pointed out and put forward.

If a member of the board other than the chairperson (under subsection (9)) ceases to hold office before the expiry of the member's term, the person appointed to replace that member holds office for the remainder of the term of the member being replaced.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very glad that that could not have been spelled out clearer, and I'm sure that the people of Saskatchewan and the House in general concurs with that aspect. We know that the agenda of this government can go forth relative to the public employees' pension Act being debated in this House and all members having their say, specifically on the importance of new subsection (3), subsection (9) with a member of the board other than the chairperson ceasing to hold office before the expiry of the member's term.

I'm glad that I'm able to review this in this detail in this House because, Mr. Speaker, this subsection (9) had not come to my attention in my briefings and preparation for this said speech, and I wonder what kind of implication it could have had on this

had I not been made aware of this.

I'm looking after the comma now:

. . . (and) the person appointed to replace that member (that) holds office for the remainder of the term of the member being replaced.

That has without doubt, Mr. Speaker, cleared things up.

Section (10):

At the first meeting of the board held after the coming into force of this section and in each subsequent year at the first meeting held after June 30, the board shall elect from its member a vice-chairperson to serve a term of one year.

The chairperson may call meetings (and this is subsection (11), Mr. Speaker) of the board whenever the chairperson considers it necessary to do so for the proper administration of this Act.

Now where we seem to be lacking, Mr. Speaker, is there is no subsection 12. And I would wonder, having seen here that we have a subsection under 4 that no one could be appointed for more than two terms, but it seems that something has gone amiss . . . is the vice-chairperson that can serve one term of one year. There is no mention of how many consecutive terms you could serve as Vice-Chair.

I know that members on this side of the House are likely concerned by that point and that . . . I hope that possibly when this moves into committee the minister responsible for such said legislation will heed these remarks and review them with diligence. It would be a real shame . . .

Oh, as the member for Carrot River Valley has pointed out, it is possibly necessary that due diligence be pointed out and carried out with regard to that aspect — a vice-chairperson's being able to serve for a one-year term and the nature of how many terms can be replicated, or can they be consecutive terms, and is there a limit on the number of consecutive terms that a Vice-Chair could serve.

Mr. Speaker, I would assume that an amendment may come forward for a subsection 12 to address that very important point.

Section 4, Mr. Speaker, going on with the Bill:

**. . . 4(2) is amended by striking out "representing" and substituting "appointed on behalf of".**

And again we see the prudence in making that change, Mr. Speaker, because without being able to come up with these type of semantical changes, it would really be pressing to the future of Saskatchewan if we didn't have things such as, representing and substituting, appointed on behalf of.

I'm glad, Mr. Speaker, that there have been individuals that have taken their time in drafting such legislation to have this level of detail so that things do not go amiss.

It's obvious under section 4, amended under section 5, that you

know, health care and agriculture and our crisis there, and education, that civil servants are being directed to spend valuable time, Mr. Speaker, by this NDP government by determining and correcting such semantical problems.

Section 5 amended goes on, and it's amended by clause:

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

“(a.1) set the term of office for the chairperson and determine the . . . (remuneration for) the chairperson”;

**(b) by adding the following clause after clause (e):**

. . . provide (prescription) . . . pension benefits that may be purchased by members with amounts standing to their credit in the fund”;

Section (c) in clause (g):

. . . **by striking out “and” after subclause (i);**

**(ii) by adding “and” after subclause (ii); and**

**(iii) by adding the following subclause after subclause (ii):**

“(iii) the calculations of the amounts in the fund standing to the credit of members”; **and (by)**

**(d) by repealing clauses (h) and (i).**

Mr. Speaker, having read that I think I'll have to refer now to the prior Act so that we're absolutely clear where we are on this, as this was superseding the Act number . . . from 1996.

I'm looking now, Mr. Speaker, through the provisions to be able to change such amendments under section 5. And under section 5 the explanation that I have before me is that the plan is seeking to provide its members with the opportunity to purchase prescribed . . . (inaudible) . . . retirement income funds.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that that is the same section 5 as was here, so I'll have to go through it again.

**Section 5 is amended:**

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

“(a.1) set the term of office for the chairperson and determine the . . . (remuneration) of the chairperson”;

**(b) by adding the following clause after clause (e):**

“(e.1) provide prescribed pension benefits that may be purchased by members with amounts standing to their credit in the fund”;

And perhaps that is exactly, Mr. Speaker, what is coming about by the p-p-r-i-f.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've got:

**Section 8 amended**

**(Section) 7(1) Clause 8(3)(d) is amended by striking out “sections 15 and 16” and substituting “section 15, 16 and 18 . . . (1)”.**

. . . **Subsection 8(4) is amended:**

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

“(a.1) payments pursuant to (the) prescribed pension benefits purchased by members from amounts standing to their credit in the fund”; **and**

**. . . in clause (c) by striking out “interest” and substituting “investment earnings”.**

Again, Mr. Speaker, this makes sense as the pension fund and the recipients of those said funds should be aware that the investments being made, it's demonstrative on their statements whether these are capital losses or capital gains; not just whether they are . . . not just whether they are interest from a bank account as we would all be aware of with our own savings account. It should be completely clear in the PEPP (Public Employees Pension Plan) that . . . the differentiation between the two.

**Section 9 amended**

. . . **9(2)(a) is repealed and the following substituted:**

“(a) (to) calculate the amounts in a specialty fund standing to the credit of members who elect to participate in the specialty fund, having regard to the value of the assets allocated to the specialty fund pursuant to . . . (section) (1) and the revenue and other earnings accruing from the investment of the assets allocated to the specialty fund”.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Page if possibly I could have some water delivered because as I'm going through the Act here, I'm finding that though the material is fascinating, my mouth is drying somewhat.

And relative to:

**Section 17 amended**

. . . **Subsection 17(3) is repealed and the following (is to be) substituted:**

. . . If any contributions have not been remitted within the period mentioned in subsection (2), the employer shall pay, in addition to the contributions, the amount, determined by the board, that is required to ensure that the amount standing to the credit of the member is not less than it would have been if the contributions had been remitted within the period mentioned in subsections (2)”.

I'm glad again, Mr. Speaker, that we have dedicated so much prudence to being able to determine who will be paid which, at how much, where.



Mr. Speaker, this brings us on to our fourth page of the Act, which is:

**Section 18 amended**

**10(1) Subsection 18(3) is amended by striking out “allocated interest on those contributions” and substituting “interest that, as of December 31, 1997, was allocated on those contributions”.**

**... Subsection 18(4) is amended by striking out “interest” and substituting “investment earnings”.**

**... (and) The portion of subsection 18(5) preceding clause (a) is amended by striking out “interest” and substituting “investment earnings”.**

I’ve touched on that again, Mr. Speaker. But with the attention that I have of the House now I can’t see how it would hurt to reiterate that. Again, again the situation that we have is that monies . . . people are starting out with their pension, that they should be able to understand whether or not these are investment earnings through capital gains or capital losses, and not merely having it designated and possibly misinterpreted as interest from a bank account.

(15:30)

So this I believe, Mr. Speaker, is the fourth spot in the Bill which has addressed this particular issue, and that seems to keep a level of consistency throughout.

**Subsection 18(7) is amended by adding “or a lump sum payment pursuant to section 19.1” after “this Act”.**

Section 18.1 is amended and:

**(a) in the portion preceding clause (a) by striking out “, within one year after the date of termination,”.**

This again makes good sense as it keeps linear time, not consistent in the province of Saskatchewan with everywhere else. It’s possibly, from time to time under our current NDP government I have often wondered whether they’d make a motion, Mr. Speaker, to introduce metric time and change the whole process. And I can see, Mr. Speaker, that your attention on this matter, you’re agreeing that possibly that may be a good idea for the . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. I would ask the member not to involve the Speaker directly into the substance of the debate. The member may continue, the member from Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, as I will continue on subsection on 18.1:

**in the portion preceding clause (a) by striking out “, within one year after the date of termination,”;**

**in clause (a) by striking out “interest” and substituting “investment earnings”.**

Mr. Speaker, and:

**in clause (b) by striking out “interest” and substituting “investment earnings”.**

New section, 18.2:

**The following section is added after section 18.1:**

**“Transfers by former members**

In this section, ‘external plan’ means a pension (fund) . . . or fund or a retirement savings plan or (to a) fund to which transfer may be pursuant to subsection 18(2).

Subject to any terms and conditions prescribed in the regulations, a person who, as a member, has transferred to an external plan pursuant to subsection 18(2) the amount standing to his or her credit may transfer back into the plan the amount standing to his or her credit in the external plan for the purpose of purchasing a prescribed pension benefit from the board.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you can imagine that the public employees in general are concerned. They are concerned, Mr. Speaker, with the changes being made to the PEPP board, following a study undertaken in 2003.

The new board make-up will be one person appointed by PEPP employers, one person appointed by SaskPower, SaskTel, and SaskEnergy; one person appointed by Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology), and SLGA (Saskatchewan Liquor and Gaming Association); one person appointed by Sask Crop Insurance, Mr. Speaker, if we’re still lucky enough to have Sask Crop Insurance, Mr. Speaker. We’ve seen year after year, with that particular corporation, the coverage fall while the premiums increase.

Mr. Speaker, there’ll also be a person appointed to The Public Employees Pension Amendment Act by SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees’ Union) and one from CEP (Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada) and one person from IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers) and one person from CUPE (Canadian Union of Public Employees). The board will choose its own chairperson, and the plan will seek to allow members to purchase Prescribed Registered Retirement Income Funds from the plan. This I think I outlined, Mr. Speaker, in subsection 12 in my earlier remarks.

Clarification of the board’s ability to allocate investment earnings to the members will be given to the board, and they will put in place provisions allowing former members to transfer money into the plan. It adds a provision for those who are terminally ill to transfer monies out of their plan in one lump sum, and that, Mr. Speaker, is a very wise move. It will allow families in dire need to be able to access monies, possibly if you have someone terminally ill with cancer to enjoy a last trip with a family member. And if that’s the case, we would allow, Mr. Speaker, that such a move is a good one for the pension plan.

After all, if an individual works for years and years and is able to build up equity in a pension plan but are cut short of life because of some, Mr. Speaker, because of some tragedy in their health condition and possibly being put on a very long waiting list and possibly having to wait, Mr. Speaker, it would be great if they are allowed to remove that monies or those monies from the pension plan. And thus we applaud that move because it would allow people to take monies that they can't spend once they're gone and possibly enjoy some time with loved ones and be able to keep going and enjoy the money while they're alive.

Mr. Speaker, we want to see a number of new sections being added, and we will want to know why these changes are being made and what effect they will have on the financial status of the Public Employees Pension Plan. We see, Mr. Speaker, on pension plans in general at the federal level, with Air Canada we have a situation where a company's possibly in trouble, and you have individuals that have worked many, many years worried about the status of their retirement.

And we would hope that the Government of Saskatchewan would want to do the best that it can for civil servants to be able to ensure that, for the years that they work and provide service, that they are given, that they are given, Mr. Speaker, the dignity and the retirement that they deserve by their pension plan being exactly what they expected it to be and that due process has been taken place by our Assembly to allow that to happen.

Every member of this legislature must do our best to ensure the pension plans that fall under our jurisdiction remain viable for all retirees in the future as well as current retirees. And, Mr. Speaker, this Act speaks to that a little bit. However one of the things absolutely necessary regarding this Act is that we don't have pensions funds top-ended, where we have more persons drawing from the plans than are contributing to them.

And unfortunately under this current government, this is very problematic because what we have seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, is that we've seen the demographics of this province move upward. We've seen an out-migration of young people. We've seen . . . in my own community, Mr. Speaker, we're down to 17 farmers under 40. None of these individuals happen to be civil servants, but the local meetings in general, Mr. Speaker, see an older and older populace. And as these populace grow older, it means they're going to start to draw on their own retirements, Mr. Speaker.

The pension plan amendment Act is very important to this because if we have fewer and fewer taxpayers for the future, Mr. Speaker, it is going to mean that that pension could possibly be in jeopardy. So what is . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Why is the member from Melville-Saltcoats on his feet?

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — With leave to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member for Melville-Saltcoats has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and, through you, to the members of the legislature a large, large number of delegates from SARM today and SARM directors that are here that have come from the Centre of the Arts, having a meeting over there to deal with the . . . get the government's attention to deal with the high education tax on farm property.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the legislature to welcome them here this afternoon.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, also while I'm on my feet, I would like to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 49.

**The Speaker:** — The request is out of order at this time as there is a question under debate at the present time. So the member is out of order.

I recognize the member for Meadow Lake.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With leave as well to introduce guests, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — The member for Meadow Lake has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I as well, on behalf of the Government of Saskatchewan, would like to welcome all of our guests to the gallery here today. Representing the constituency of Meadow Lake, I suspect there might be someone from our region in the northwest of the province. I'm not sure of that. I understand yesterday, Mr. Speaker, the Premier and our minister responsible met with President Neal Hardy.

And it's a pleasure to be able to welcome all of these guests here to our galleries today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Melville-Saltcoats on his feet?

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, with leave, I'd like to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 49.

**The Speaker:** — I'd like to advise the member that his request is out of order because there is a motion that's being debated . . . currently debating. It would only be in order after the current debate would be adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

## SECOND READINGS

**Bill No. 28 — The Public Employees Pension Plan  
Amendment Act, 2004  
(continued)**

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, I would now move that we adjourn Bill No. 28.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on second reading of Bill No. 28 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion? Those who favour the motion say aye.

**Some Hon. Members:** — Aye.

**The Speaker:** — Those opposed to the motion say nay.

**Some Hon. Members:** — No.

**The Speaker:** — I believe the nos have it. Call in the members for a standing vote.

The division bells rang from 15:41 until 15:51.

**The Speaker:** — Order. The motion before the House is the one moved by the member for Kindersley that debate on second reading of Bill 28 be now adjourned. Those with favour of the motion please rise.

## Yeas — 52

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Cline	Sonntag	Crofford
Prebble	Forbes	Wartman
Belanger	Higgins	Thomson
Nilson	Beatty	Hamilton
Junor	Harper	Iwanchuk
McCall	Quennell	Trew
Yates	Taylor	Morin
Borgerson	Wall	Toth
Heppner	D'Autremont	Draude
Hermanson	Bjornerud	Stewart
Wakefield	Morgan	McMorris
Eagles	Gantfoer	Harpauer
Bakken	Cheveldayoff	Huyghebaert
Allchurch	Brkich	Kerpan
Chisholm	Dearborn	Hart
Kirsch		

**The Speaker:** — All those opposed to the motion please rise.

## Nays — nil

**The Speaker:** — I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Melville-Saltcoats on his feet?

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, with leave to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 49.

**The Speaker:** — Could the member explain briefly the nature of the motion before I ask for leave.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today at the Centre of the Arts the SARM delegates, SARM directors, and everyone from rural Saskatchewan is represented at the Centre of the Arts. And the issue they're here to deal with today is the high education tax on property, and the promises I believe the Premier has made in the past to deal with those issues, and to this point that hasn't happened.

Mr. Speaker, I think we would like to have a debate on that issue at this time with the delegates here so they can hear what both sides of the House have to say about this issue.

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

**The Speaker:** — I thank the member for his explanation, and I do want to welcome all of the delegates here. And I request their co-operation with respect to the proceedings of the House, and that they allow the proceedings to continue in the House without impeding any progress. And that does include applause, although I understand it's well meant. And now the member from Melville-Saltcoats has requested leave to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

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

## MOTION UNDER RULE 49

## Education Tax on Property

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for the last 12 years I would say, 10, 12 years, the load on rural Saskatchewan has been growing and growing. In fact municipalities know better — far better than anyone else in this province how the books were balanced when Mr. Romanow was premier of this province.

It was on the backs of these same people, the downloading onto municipalities, the cut to programs that farmers had to live with and, Mr. Speaker, I think they're here today because the frustration is peaking; they're at wits end and they really can't take anymore.

Mr. Speaker, these people have been promised by that government for a number of years and in the last while by the Premier that he would deal with this issue. The Boughen Commission recommended that no. 1 that the PST was raised, which we may have some concerns with, but on the other hand it was being raised to deal with the education tax on property. Well the government did one part of that, Mr. Speaker. They

raised the PST.

Where the problem comes in, Mr. Speaker, is they forgot all about the Boughen report. They forgot all about education tax. They forgot that at one point 60 per cent of education tax in this province was paid by the government of the day; 40 per cent was paid by the rural ratepayers and other taxpayers in the province.

Mr. Speaker, in the past 10 or 12 years that has took a complete flip flop. In fact, I would go as far as to say right now 70 per cent of education tax is paid by the local property owners; 30 per cent is paid by this government.

Mr. Speaker, it's just another example of downloading by this government. And, Mr. Speaker, at a time when these people are dealing with BSE, an issue that has cost them millions upon millions of dollars, while these people are dealing with drought . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. I would just remind the member that he is not to draw into debate anybody that might be in the gallery. Member may continue.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, these people that are dealing . . . the farmers of this province are dealing with drought, BSE, high taxes, their input costs are skyrocketing, the price of fertilizer again this year has gone up and up. What do we see from that government on the other side? Well I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, nothing that will help anyone in the province of Saskatchewan that has a farm or a ranch, anything like that.

Let's take a look at the budget, Mr. Speaker. First of all, one of the highlights that comes out of it is they raised the PST (provincial sales tax). Well 1 per cent — \$136 million into the coffers for the NDP.

How much of that money is going to help farmers in Saskatchewan? What did they do to see fit to return some of that money? They close rural service centres in Saskatchewan. They fire the ag reps out of rural Saskatchewan. Another hit on rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. Twenty-two of the thirty-one rural service centres are gone. Jobs out of rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. The closure, nine Saskatchewan environment offices, another hit really on rural Saskatchewan.

Here's a big one, Mr. Speaker, and it's not the issue that these people are talking about, that farmers are talking about today, but it's one they may be talking about tomorrow. It's the closure of hospitals in Saskatchewan, it's the downsizing of long-term care homes. And, Mr. Speaker, with our aging population in this province, the last thing we need is less health care in rural Saskatchewan and less beds in our long-term care homes.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, before the 1991 election, there wasn't one word about hospital closures in the election campaign of the NDP. After the election — I believe it was 1992 — we saw 52 rural hospitals gone.

Now the problem also with that, Mr. Speaker, I guess the question you would ask is, did it save money? Well if it did, we don't know where it went, Mr. Speaker. Maybe in dot-coms down in the States or money in Australia, investments this government has made, but the people of Saskatchewan did not see the benefit for closing 52 hospitals.

The other question, Mr. Speaker, we have asked ourselves: did it improve health care for anyone in Saskatchewan, especially rural people? Fifty-two hospitals gone — what happened to our health care?

We now have the longest waiting lists in the country, in Canada. The longest waiting lists are here in Saskatchewan where medicare evidently was born. We're sure looking after medicare in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

(16:00)

And, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to care homes, nobody knows better than I do because now both my parents reside in a care home. And my mother just said to me on the weekend — after some of the comments made on that side about dying quicker and alleviating spaces in long-term care homes — she said, I suppose this government wants three or four of us out of every one of these care homes to die quickly so we can alleviate some beds and they can close some beds.

Mr. Speaker, in rural Saskatchewan our population is aging. We don't need less beds in our care homes. We don't need less care homes. We need more beds and more care homes, Mr. Speaker.

And this government has got to see that. Because what happens, Mr. Speaker, is once you close facilities like hospitals in rural Saskatchewan and you close care homes, they will never be opened again. Have we saw one of the fifty-two hospitals that were closed, opened? No we haven't, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we go on to look at some of the other highlights in the budget the NDP has brought forward. We talk about the 20 per cent reduction and the rebate on farm fuel tax — at a time when fuel is going up. You just have to drive downtown in Regina and look at cost of gas, look at the diesel cost for farmers in the province of Saskatchewan. And this government sees fit to cut the rebate to farmers, Mr. Speaker.

Another thing that they plan on doing and have done is cancellation of the livestock and horticultural facilities incentive program. Another hit on rural Saskatchewan; another hit on farmers; another hit on ranchers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, a cancellation of the farm family opportunities initiative and Conservation Cover Program; \$700,000 reduction to funding for Prairie Diagnostic Services lab. This lab is responsible for chronic wasting disease and testing. And \$338,000 reduction to other agriculture industry grants.

And the Minister of Agriculture's been telling us in the last few weeks — questioning from my counterpart from Thunder Creek — they're doing all these things to help farmers. God, Mr. Speaker, if they didn't like farmers, can you imagine what they'd be doing to them?

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Mr. Speaker, they also go on to say that they're going to eliminate the short-term hog loan program and livestock drought program. And that happens to be at a time when it looks like we could have another drought in a big part of Saskatchewan. In fact the summers bring on droughts that we don't even expect at this time of year, Mr. Speaker — a very poor time to do that.

Closure of extension services branches, increased park fees, fishing licences, and new campfire fees — well I don't think that will bother anyone in this House today, Mr. Speaker, because the way things are going under this government's leadership, we can't afford three bucks for a fire in the park even if they do open, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — They also promised to close 12 provincial parks; and they reneged on that, they backed down on that, Mr. Speaker. And I'm not sure that wasn't a ploy, Mr. Speaker, to detract attention away from what they really did in this budget — like raise the PST and cut agriculture programs that hurt every person out in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, farm people have the BSE to deal with, they've got drought to deal with, they've got high input costs. There's no end to the things that are happening out there in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And the thing we seem to forget, the government seems to forget, Mr. Speaker, that the backbone of this province is agriculture, has been agriculture, and will be agriculture.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Now you know, Mr. Speaker, I thought after the last election — and remembering where I come from I was a bit in a close race out there myself, wasn't sure I was going to be back — but I thought when we got in here with such close numbers in here, well, the public of Saskatchewan has spoken; 30 members on that side, 28 on this side. Really close I thought. We should give the government a chance, remembering that I've been here for 9 years, they've been here for 12.

But you know I look at these things that have come down in this budget and without a doubt, Mr. Speaker, it is the worst budget on people of Saskatchewan — not just rural Saskatchewan, not urban Saskatchewan, all of Saskatchewan. We have a government, Mr. Speaker, we have a government with no direction. They know one thing — raise taxes, make cuts to rural Saskatchewan. That's their big theme in life, Mr. Speaker.

So as I said, I thought let's give them the benefit of the doubt. Let's let them go a year, maybe two, see how they do, if they come up with some new inventive ideas. To this date we've saw nothing, Mr. Speaker.

We saw them promise SARM delegates at convention . . . I think the Premier's comment was that the status quo was not on. Never said it once, never said it twice. I believe he didn't even just say it three times. He said it four or five times that the

status quo is not on.

Well you know I guess he was right. He said the status quo on education tax is not on because what they've done with the amount of money they put into education this year . . . Education tax on farm property is not going to at least stay level. I believe, Mr. Speaker, it's going to go up because the money they put into education this year will last till about August. Then you know who's going to pick the tab up again? The same farmers and ranchers that I'm talking about today. The same people, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — So, Mr. Speaker, we've saw this morning . . . I attended the SARM meeting over there at the Centre of the Arts, and I found it really amazing when you walked in the door. This is a busy time in rural Saskatchewan. Some of the farmers on the West side are already starting to seed. They're worried about the amount of moisture they have. The guys on the East side are getting ready for seeding and yet how many thousand people did we see in the Centre of the Arts today because this is such an important issue, and this is an issue that was the Premier promised . . . I believe the last premier promised to address it.

I think when the previous SARM president was in place, he was promised that this government would deal with it. Now we have Neal Hardy as president and new directors, some cases many new people that belong as SARM delegates, they were promised by this government that it would be dealt with.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to get the chance for the Premier and people on that side of the House to get up today and tell people in this province, Mr. Speaker, how they're going to deal with the education tax; how they're going to help the farming community in this province, because, Mr. Speaker, they can't take it any longer. They can't take the education tax load on property.

Mr. Speaker, out in rural Saskatchewan — and I know in my constituency is like every other one — we have less kids in our constituency than we did two years ago, a lot less than five years ago, and a lot less than ten years ago. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we're being asked in rural Saskatchewan to pick up a bigger share of the education tax on property. Mr. Speaker, it is without a doubt the most unfair tax this province has ever seen and that government's brought in some dillies but it is the worst, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — So, Mr. Speaker, even with all the problems in agriculture these days the budget for agriculture, the primary industry in rural Saskatchewan, is \$27 million lower in the budget than it was two years ago. And that's a sign that we're helping farmers and ranchers in this province?

Mr. Speaker, go back to 1990 . . . And this government's favourite thing was, we like to go back to the '80s and blame them for all their woes. I believe the agriculture budget in this province in 1990 was around \$1.1 billion. Do you know where that budget is today, Mr. Speaker? About \$240 million last year.

\$240 million is less than 25 per cent of where it was in 1990.

Mr. Speaker, this government has downloaded on rural Saskatchewan as far as we feel they can go. It's time if we want to grow this province, we want more people to come back to this province, we want to find jobs to keep our kids in this province. Many here today have kids in this province that are going to school and getting educated, getting ready to leave for Alberta, the States, or Ontario. We need to change directions in this province.

This government has an opportunity today with a very large audience to tell them how they're going to do that. Mr. Speaker, I'd hope today that the government is listening very closely to the messages that they are hearing and at this point I would like to pass the motion . . . move the motion, Mr. Speaker:

That this Assembly direct the Premier and cabinet to meet with the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities in order to discuss solutions to the growing problem of rising education property tax in Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, from Swift Current, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats and seconded by the member for Swift Current:

That this Assembly directs the Premier and cabinet to meet with the Board of Directors of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities today in order to discuss solutions to the growing problem of rising education property tax in Saskatchewan.

I recognize the member for Swift Current.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thanks to my colleague from Melville-Saltcoats for so clearly and so articulately outlining the case that is being made across this province and here in the Assembly today, that rural Saskatchewan simply cannot sustain any more attacks by its government, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, those who are fighting for some relief of the education funding on property in this province, those who came to the Centre of the Arts in the capital city today, those who have come to the Legislative Assembly — we should acknowledge today that they're not only fighting this fight on behalf of their ratepayers and their friends and families in rural Saskatchewan. They are fighting this fight on behalf as well of urban property tax owners in the province of Saskatchewan. Because, Mr. Speaker, over the decade of NDP rule, the decade plus, the downloading of education funding onto the property tax — onto property, Mr. Speaker — it has not only exacted a cost in rural Saskatchewan. But it continues to exact a cost in the cities of our province, in my home city, Mr. Speaker, and here where we sit in Regina, where the school boards also are

considering significant increases — increases, Mr. Speaker — in school tax, and tax on property in the cities.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very, very important issue — not only for our farm families, not only for rural Saskatchewan, but for the province. We can no longer afford to sit on our hands in this province. The NDP ought not to be sitting on their hands and seeing us increasingly become less competitive, less able to sustain a quality of life, less able to sustain the health care that we need, the local services that we need, the education that we need, Mr. Speaker, in this province. And the burgeoning, the burgeoning amount of dependency on land for education funding is doing that, Mr. Speaker. It's doing that.

People eventually have enough. They have enough in the case of farm families when their input costs — property taxes chief among them — when their input costs do nothing but rise in an environment of commodity prices that do not, in an environment where borders are closed to commodities

Mr. Speaker, when that situation happens, you get the reality, the tragic reality we see across rural Saskatchewan, that you can see in the classifieds. An increase in auctions, Mr. Speaker. An increase in the number of farm families who say we just can't do it anymore. There's too many pressures. The costs are too high. We just can't do it anymore. And in many cases, too many cases, Mr. Speaker, then they vote with their feet. They leave this province, young and old alike, if they can't afford to continue operating.

The same, the same threat is now on the horizon, not just in rural Saskatchewan, but in urban Saskatchewan. We can't simply just keep taking in our own laundry like we've been doing for six decades in this province. We can't afford to see rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, dwindle, even if urban Saskatchewan — on an artificial basis I would say — is seemingly holding their own in some of the major centres.

Because, Mr. Speaker, to the extent that cities are able to hold their own, because rural Saskatchewan is dwindling — that is not a plan, Mr. Speaker, for the future of this province. It's not sustainable, and we will have no hope, no hope to bring the services that the people of this province need from this legislature in terms of health care and education and even social services, or help for producers when they desperately need it. We won't be able to do it if the situation doesn't change.

Mr. Speaker, we have been for some number of weeks not only on this issue — that's been so properly articulated by the member from Melville-Saltcoats and others on the issue of the education portion of property tax — but on others.

We have been highlighting what happened just a few months ago in an election when promises were made, promises were made by the leader of the governing party, by the leader of the NDP. Promises were made by the NDP on this specific issue, not just during the election, but after. When SARM delegates were told by their Premier that status quo was not on . . . that's what he said. The status quo was not on. What do we see in the budget? What do we see in that same leader's budget on the issue of the education portion of property taxes? The status quo. We see the status quo, the very thing that he said wasn't on. That's what's in the budget. Maybe the Premier hasn't been

comfortable with that line of questioning, whether it's been on the issue of property taxes or health care, as the member from Melville-Saltcoats has articulated, or any of the other promises that seem to have been forgotten.

But, Mr. Speaker, we don't much care on this side of the House whether anybody over there is comfortable today or any other day because promises were made. Solemn promises were made, and we will not stop asking those questions until those promises are kept, Mr. Speaker.

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

(16:15)

**Mr. Wall:** — As I said in the budget speech, Mr. Speaker, about 130 years ago I guess, Abraham Lincoln said that truth is generally the best vindication against slander. If the governing party doesn't like the line of questioning as to why they would make a promise with respect to property taxes in rural or urban Saskatchewan and then break the promise in the budget, if they don't like it, well there's a solution; it's called the truth. It's called keeping your word. And that should be reason enough. It should be reason enough.

But there's something else that should be motivating members opposite to do this. There's something else, and that's the future of our province because if there is to be a future in Saskatchewan that is as bright as we all know it can be, if we are to realize our potential, that potential, that future is not just in urban Saskatchewan, but it is in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It must be.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Far from being a liability, rural Saskatchewan presents a great opportunity for us. Farm families represent a great opportunity for us. Value-added agriculture represents a great opportunity for us. But we have to start at the foundation. The foundation is the sustainability of agriculture. And the sustainability of agriculture is dependent on whether or not, whether or not farm families can make some money, can survive, can raise a family, can pay some taxes so services can be provided. And that's what we're talking about here today, Mr. Speaker.

In the last election we too laid out a plan for property tax relief. There was a short-term measure that we highlighted, a 15 per cent reduction in the education portion of property tax on farm land. And then we spoke to a long-term plan to return the ratio of funding at least to 50/50, at least to 50/50 as a starting point.

That was a plan. And we made that commitment to delegates of SARM. We made it to farm families. We said it in the city. We also had a plan for lightening the burden of education funding in urban Saskatchewan on property tax as well.

And, Mr. Speaker — and, Mr. Speaker — I would say this: the NDP, although they weren't as specific, they made similar promises. But I'll tell you today, the difference between the commitment that we made and the commitment that they made is that we fully intended to keep the commitment that we made for rural Saskatchewan.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — We understood that there were no easy answers. We understood that the NDP had taken a Roy Romanow surplus of almost half a billion dollars, according to the Provincial Auditor, and in short measure the current Premier had turned it into a billion and a half increase in the debt and the current huge deficit that hangs over our province. We understood that in the election.

We didn't know all the details, and so we said clearly and honestly — in terms of balancing the budget and making sure there was a priority for things like the reduction of the education portion on property tax — we said that we would achieve a balanced budget over the term of our government. We were straightforward. The member for Rosetown was straightforward when asked the question. We understand that there is difficulties, and that we'll need a longer period of time to balance the budget. But it is crucial, it is crucial that in the interim that some relief be provided, some relief be provided to rural Saskatchewan and to urban Saskatchewan who suffer under the weight of these property taxes.

I think what's even most alarming for us, Mr. Speaker, is that the government's apparent willingness to break its commitment with respect to property taxes is joined by far too many other examples of the government's willingness to attack rural Saskatchewan. The budget eliminated the farm fuel tax rebate on gasoline and propane, as you know, effective Jan. 1. The livestock and horticultural facilities incentive program — not renewed. Increased vehicle registration fees; increased fees at ISC (Information Services Corporation of Saskatchewan) that will impact rural Saskatchewan; water testing fee increases; they closed 22 rural centres as of April 30; cancellation of the farm family opportunities initiative and the Conservation Cover Program; elimination of the short-term hog loan program and livestock drought loan; crop insurance budget cut by \$6 million, Mr. Speaker; higher premiums and less coverage for the last three years.

And I look forward to the intervention of government members opposite because they need to let the farm families of this province know, they need to let them know why they did these things to rural Saskatchewan. There are people in rural Saskatchewan that are asking some very sobering questions. Is it because that we sent Sask Party members to the legislature? Is that why? Is that why we're being punished by the government? That's the questions that are being asked because the evidence seems to be in. The evidence was in the budget. The evidence is in the broken promises.

Members on that side of the House need to do more than just assure Saskatchewan farm families that that's not the case. But they need to highlight exactly what they're going to do to backup their words — that they believe in rural Saskatchewan, that they understand that our province will not succeed without both urban and rural Saskatchewan prosperous, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — The most recent example came with respect to CAIS (Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization), the federal farm safety net program. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? Can

you imagine the former minister of Agriculture holding out for improvements to CAIS, holding out firmly for improvements to CAIS in terms of the cap and negative margins? That's what the government said; we're not signing on until we get these improvements. They said that before the election; we will not sign on to this safety net program if there aren't improvements, specifically negative margins and the cap.

So what happens, Mr. Speaker? What happens? The federal government responds. They respond on both counts, on negative margins and on the cap. We have a new Agriculture minister, and what does he do? He erases that old line in the sand, and he draws another one right through rural Saskatchewan. And he says, no not good enough. That is absolutely unacceptable. It's unacceptable because it lets down farm families.

They promised farm families that if the federal government does this, we'll be there. The federal government did that and where are the NDP? They're nowhere to be seen, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this on that particular, on that particular issue: how will we ever have any credibility at all with the federal government? How will that Agriculture minister and that Premier have any credibility at all with the federal government on any issue — on agriculture, on the equalization formula they seek to change, with our support I would add. How will they have any impact in terms of a new deal on health care, if the federal government understands that this NDP government asks for something before an election, and when it's given, they back off, Mr. Speaker, they back off?

They don't just hurt our ability to negotiate better deals for our province in the future when they do that, but they slap rural Saskatchewan in the face because rural Saskatchewan would've taken that minister and that Premier at their word, that if those changes were made, they would be signing on. I believe there's three provinces that haven't signed on only, and we're one of them — amazingly enough, the province that pushed hardest for the changes.

And I want to say this: when those changes were announced by our federal and provincial ... the former minister of Agriculture, we supported it. The Agriculture critic went on the media and supported the NDP in doing it. But little did we know that they asked for these things and had no intention, no intention of funding them, of signing on.

Mr. Speaker, that's the latest example, the latest example of an NDP government that is perfectly willing to say one thing in rural Saskatchewan during an election. In terms of posturing, in terms of politics and rhetoric, they'll say one thing, and, Mr. Speaker, completely ignore that after an election.

I don't know what it is the Premier will say if he'll enter this debate. I wonder will he comment at all on his visit to SARM, to the delegates, where he said the status quo was not an option? Will he highlight for them how he could say that at the convention, and then apparently come back to cabinet at a budget meeting and make no effort to ensure that the word is kept and represented in a budget that lightened the burden of education tax on farm land?

I'm going to be very interested, members on this side of the House. Rural Saskatchewan will be very, very interested in hearing. Delegates to SARM will be very interested in hearing the answer to that. And so will those, so will those people who watch these proceedings and who follow the news in the cities, in the cities because again, Mr. Speaker — as I opened, these delegates from SARM that gathered at the Centre of the Arts today and those who had come to the legislature, Mr. Speaker — they are not just fighting for this issue for rural Saskatchewan. They are fighting for the entire province.

They are fighting for the principle that promises made should be promises kept. And so now this, this very eminently reasonable motion we bring before the House calls on the Premier and his cabinet to meet, to sit down immediately and meet with the board of SARM, and explain to them why a promise made at the convention shouldn't be kept in a budget and highlight for them exactly what they're going to do about this very, very serious situation.

That's what the motion calls for today before the Assembly. And as members opposite stand to speak to it, I'd ask them, I'd ask them to address that directly. Address it directly. And if they don't agree that the Premier and cabinet should meet with the board of SARM immediately, they ought to say why. They ought to say why, in light of what's happened, in terms of the promises that have been made and the promises that have not been kept.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue to ask these questions in the Legislative Assembly. We're going to continue to ask questions on behalf of rural Saskatchewan and on behalf of urban Saskatchewan. We are going to be there on the issue of property tax on this side of the House. We're going to be there on the issue of long-term bed closures. We'll be there on the issue of the property tax burden in urban Saskatchewan. We will be there and ask the questions.

And if the government tires of it, they're not going to find a lot of sympathy over here because, you know what, it's not just 28 members of the opposition that are asking the questions — it's the people to whom we are responsible. It's the people of this province, the owners of the Legislative Assembly that we stand in right now. That's on whose behalf we'll ask these questions.

I ask all members to support this motion, and more importantly to make a priority, Mr. Speaker, a priority, a priority of reducing the burden of education portion of property tax. Don't rag the puck today, I would say through you to the members opposite. Let this come to a vote. And then stand up not only for rural Saskatchewan, but for this province that so desperately needs both rural and urban. We ask that of the members respectfully across the way today through you, Mr. Speaker. And I'll tell you, I'll tell you, members on this House, we will be standing. We will be standing in enthusiastic, energetic, and forceful support of this motion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member, the Minister for Government Relations.

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And



it's a real pleasure today to be able to stand and to address the House on this important issue. I stand as the Minister of Government Relations, the minister who has been at meetings with the board of directors of SARM and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) and other levels of government, a minister who hails from rural Saskatchewan, and a minister who feels very deeply that this is an issue that must be addressed. And the opportunity to be able to discuss it in the Chamber today is a good one.

I also want to welcome a former member of the Legislative Assembly and now president of SARM, Mr. Neal Hardy, to the chambers today, to welcome him and let him know that again, as always, he is welcome here and his words are always well listened to. And, Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to those who may be watching this debate at home on television or in the chambers here today, Mr. Speaker, that this government has made commitments to rural Saskatchewan as well as other parts of Saskatchewan, has made commitments, and it is our intention during the course of this government to live up to those commitments, to meet the commitments that we have made to the people of Saskatchewan, and to do it in such a way that all members of our provincial society are benefiting from the work that is done here.

(16:30)

I also want to indicate to those who are watching and to the members opposite that I intend to support the motion in front of us today and that as soon as this debate is over, accompany the Premier to a meeting with SARM president and members of the board of directors to do exactly what the motion indicates today, Mr. Speaker, which is to discuss solutions to the growing problem of rising education property tax in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, it's finding the solution that is the critical part of this debate — finding the solution, Mr. Speaker. A task force on education financing was commissioned by this government not so long ago, travelled extensively across the province, met with individuals in our communities, and they heard, they heard, Mr. Speaker, that education taxes on property are too high, that education tax as it's delivered in Saskatchewan is unfair, and that some relief of that nature was necessary, Mr. Speaker.

That task force produced a report called *Finding the Balance*. Very appropriate title, Mr. Speaker — *Finding the Balance*. How do we provide quality education in this province and finance it at the same time?

And what Mr. Boughen and his report indicated was that while Saskatchewan people feel that — and there's an awful lot of truth behind it; that's why people are expressing their concerns today and have been over the last little while — has indicated that while there are inequities in the way in which we finance education, the solution that was put forward to this government by the Boughen Commission was to simply transfer \$200 million, eventually \$300 million, from the property tax base to another level of taxation in the province.

And the people of Saskatchewan, partly through the petitions that were raised across this country, or this province, the people of Saskatchewan said that transfer was unacceptable. To increase one level of tax to reduce it on the other side, Mr.

Speaker, was unacceptable.

But, Mr. Speaker, the challenge that this government has in its overall approach to what we need to do is carried right in the title of the Boughen report, not just for education but for the way in which we deliver all services to the people of Saskatchewan, rural and urban. Finding the balance. And what Saskatchewan people have said to us during the last term of this government, during the election campaign and since the election campaign, is the number one priority is health care. I don't want to get off the debate here too much, but I do think it's important we put all of this in the context, Mr. Speaker, because on the government side, as much as we are concerned about the lack of income and resources in rural Saskatchewan today, we have a responsibility not just to them but to all citizens in this province.

So when the people of Saskatchewan say to us, health care is important, and the members opposite every day in question period have been highlighting the importance of health care to the people of Saskatchewan. And they've said, preserve and protect our long-term care beds; preserve and protect our ability for diagnostic services; preserve and protect our ability to get off waiting lists and into surgery.

Mr. Speaker, these things all cost money. Finding the balance of taxes paid versus delivery of service is what government responsibility is all about. So we are taking the steps necessary to ensure that we're meeting the needs of Saskatchewan on the one hand and being fiscally responsible on the other.

So, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the way in which the budget was developed, you see that there were some new resources, but the demand for those resources was so heavy on the health care side that it was next to impossible to find a way to meet every single need that has been expressed in the province of Saskatchewan.

And I think it is being demonstrated here today, Mr. Speaker, with the representatives who have travelled across this province to be with us in this Chamber today. What they are saying is they have a crisis and they must be listened to. And, Mr. Speaker, I think the Premier had indicated at the convention earlier this year that indeed we do recognize the very difficult circumstances that anyone earning a living off the land today is having. So we want to address those issues.

When we deliver the budget, we recognize very clearly that education and health care are the two priorities of this government in addition to some other areas that we have put some money into, including agriculture and municipalities. But education and health care, Mr. Speaker, take \$3.7 billion of our current spending capacity, the revenue generated. Mr. Speaker, the total taxes collected in the province of Saskatchewan, corporate capital, corporate income tax, personal income tax, sales tax, tobacco tax, and fuel tax, the total dollar value collected from those taxes in this province, Mr. Speaker, is 3.5 billion.

The cost of health care and education in Saskatchewan is greater than the amount collected of all the taxes in the province. So we have to finance pretty well every other aspect of government, Mr. Speaker, with transfers from the Crown

corporations, with revenues from oil and gas, with fines and penalties, and with transfers from another level of government, the federal government, Mr. Speaker. So we are looking for changes to equalization, because if we can't tax the people of Saskatchewan for more services, we have to find other sources of revenue for that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we want the representatives of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, Saskatchewan chambers of commerce, and others to support this government's efforts to get some additional money under equalization from the federal government. Because, Mr. Speaker, when this government is able to access new dollars, we have priorities that are going to be addressed. And I think the Premier has indicated and this government has indicated one of our priorities, and in fact it is likely the next priority, education. We will be putting money that will assist in the reduction of education property tax across this province.

What we need is co-operation, support. And when we sit down with the Board of Directors of Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, SARM — the group that is represented by people in the gallery here today, Mr. Speaker — when we sit down with SARM, and when we sit down with SUMA, we're going to look at ways in which we can pull some new resources into this province so that we don't have to tax the people of Saskatchewan further to address the inequities that exist within our system.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is very important to us today that we hear the voices that are being brought to us from rural Saskatchewan — voices that we hear in our own communities when we're home and in our coffee shops, voices that we have heard at conventions like took place earlier this year at SARM. And, Mr. Speaker, those voices have been heard. What we have to do is find the balance, find the way in which we can work through all of this.

So, Mr. Speaker, there's a number of things that I think are important as we address all of this. One of the things I think that people in rural Saskatchewan should understand, that even though when you pick at little bits and pieces of the budget, Mr. Speaker — and it's very easy when you don't look at the overall picture to pick at bits and pieces of the budget because yes there are some difficult choices that were made — there were some difficult things that we had to do in order to ensure that we had a balanced budget and could deliver the services.

But, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to do a fair bit of reading over the last little while and you know when we look at . . . And a lot of the members opposite like to point to the province of Alberta and what they do for their citizens, Mr. Speaker. But in the province of Alberta the Government of Alberta just finished and released the results of a study done by two MLAs — government side MLAs — of the provincial legislature in Alberta.

And one of the things that this study concluded was that the picture of rural Alberta is not much different than in other parts of Canada. That picture of volunteer burnout, crumbling arenas, hospitals that can't keep doctors, and towns that can't attract business is a message that rural Alberta has been trying to send

to the provincial legislature in Alberta. And when it comes time to conclusions, Mr. Speaker, what do the MLAs say in the report? They say to rural municipalities and towns and villages in Alberta and I quote:

There is no intent on the provincial government walking in and saving rural communities. The communities have to find ways and means to save themselves.

That's what's being said in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. That is not what is being said in Saskatchewan. We are willing to work with the people who are here today; with the leadership of SARM, with the leadership of SUMA, towns and villages, to collectively, collaboratively work together to find a way to address our problems, Mr. Speaker, find the balance of being able to deliver the programs that we need to deliver with the resources that are available to us.

Join us, get together, help us, support us in our fight with Ottawa, Mr. Speaker, and we will find a way to get new resources together to address the issues that are being brought before us today and others, Mr. Speaker, because we know that we continue to have a crisis in health care. We know that we continue to have a crisis in education. We know that rural Saskatchewan needs our support.

We will not let the people of Saskatchewan down, rural or urban. We will meet our commitments. We will work with the leadership to ensure that these things happen Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to sitting down with Mr. Hardy, the board of directors, and to be able to go through the challenges that we face.

Mr. Boughen says it's a \$200 million challenge — 200 million, Mr. Speaker. That's more than we can raise with more increases in the PST, more than we can raise with resource revenues on its own, more than we can raise with fines and penalties. We don't want to go there; we don't want to do that. We want to find new resources, new revenues. We want to work with the communities to ensure that the things that need to be done will get done.

So the commitment is there, Mr. Speaker. We want partnerships to be able to find our way to do that. We make the commitment here in this House today, as we have made at the SARM convention previously, that this is the next level of interest and concern and direction for this government and we will work towards that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — The motion before the Assembly is the one moved by the member for Saltcoats and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, the member for Swift Current:

That this Assembly directs the Premier and cabinet to meet with the board of directors of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities today in order to discuss solutions to the growing problem of rising education property tax in Saskatchewan.

Is the Assembly ready for the question?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Question.

**The Speaker:** — Question has been called. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The motion is carried.

Call in the members for a standing vote.

The division bells rang from 16:43 until 16:46.

**The Speaker:** — Order please.

The motion before the Assembly is the one moved by the member for Melville-Saltcoats, and seconded by the member for Swift Current:

That this Assembly directs the Premier and cabinet meet with the board of directors of the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities today in order to discuss solutions to the growing problem of rising education property tax in Saskatchewan.

Those who favour the motion please rise.

**Yeas — 52**

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Atkinson
Cline	Sonntag	Crofford
Prebble	Forbes	Wartman
Belanger	Higgins	Thomson
Nilson	Beatty	Hamilton
Junor	Harper	Iwanchuk
McCall	Quennell	Trew
Yates	Taylor	Morin
Borgerson	Wall	Toth
Heppner	D'Autremont	Draude
Hermanson	Bjornerud	Stewart
Wakefield	Morgan	McMorris
Eagles	Gantfoer	Harpauer
Bakken	Cheveldayoff	Huyghebaert
Allchurch	Brkich	Kerpan
Chisholm	Dearborn	Hart
Kirsch		

**The Speaker:** — Those opposed to the motion please rise.

**Nays — nil**

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

**The Speaker:** — I declare the motion carried without any members dissenting.

Motion agreed to.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this House do now adjourn. 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 tomorrow at 10 a.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 16:49.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS</b>	
<b>PRESENTING PETITIONS</b>	
Bakken .....	683
Huyghebaert .....	683
Brkich .....	683
Dearborn .....	683
Hart .....	683
Hermanson .....	683
<b>READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS</b>	
Deputy Clerk .....	684
<b>NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS</b>	
Gantefoer .....	684
McMorris .....	684
Brkich .....	684
Dearborn .....	684
<b>INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS</b>	
Elhard .....	684
D'Autremont .....	684
Bjornerud .....	706
Sonntag .....	706
<b>STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS</b>	
<b>Earth Day</b>	
Borgerson .....	685
Huyghebaert .....	685
<b>Women of Today Awards</b>	
Eagles .....	685
<b>Teaching Treaties in the Classroom</b>	
Junor .....	685
<b>Swift Current Athlete Wins University of Saskatchewan Trophy</b>	
Wall .....	686
<b>Marathon in Rome</b>	
Beatty .....	686
<b>International Special Librarians Day</b>	
Dearborn .....	686
<b>Quality Improvement Champion Award</b>	
Hagel .....	686
<b>ORAL QUESTIONS</b>	
<b>Staffing for Regina Police Services</b>	
Kerpan .....	687
Quennell .....	687
<b>SaskTel's Business Investments</b>	
Elhard .....	687
Sonntag .....	688
<b>Education Property Tax</b>	
Bjornerud .....	690
Taylor .....	690
<b>Crown Corporations' Business Investments</b>	
Wall .....	691
Calvert .....	691
<b>INTRODUCTION OF BILLS</b>	
<b>Bill No. 35 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Atkinson .....	692
<b>Bill No. 36 — The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Van Mulligen .....	692
<b>Bill No. 37 — The Tobacco Tax Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Van Mulligen .....	692
<b>ORDERS OF THE DAY</b>	
<b>WRITTEN QUESTIONS</b>	
Yates .....	693
The Speaker .....	693
<b>GOVERNMENT ORDERS</b>	
<b>SECOND READINGS</b>	

<b>Bill No. 30 — The Queen’s Bench Amendment Act, 2004/ Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine</b>	
Quennell.....	693
Dearborn.....	693
<b>Bill No. 31 — The Miscellaneous Statutes Repeal (Regulatory Reform) Act, 2004</b>	
Quennell.....	696
Dearborn.....	696
<b>ADJOURNED DEBATES</b>	
<b>SECOND READINGS</b>	
<b>Bill No. 24 — The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Cheveldayoff.....	698
<b>Bill No. 25 — The Adoption Amendment Act, 2004/ Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l’adoption</b>	
Gantefoer.....	700
<b>Bill No. 26 — The Adoption Consequential Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Gantefoer.....	701
<b>Bill No. 28 — The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2004</b>	
Dearborn.....	702
Recorded Division .....	707
<b>MOTION UNDER RULE 49</b>	
<b>Education Tax on Property</b>	
Bjornerud .....	707
Wall.....	710
Taylor.....	712
Recorded Division .....	715

## **CABINET MINISTERS**

Hon. L. Calvert  
Premier

Hon. P. Atkinson  
Minister of Crown Management Board  
Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

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

Hon. B. Belanger  
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline  
Minister of Industry and Resources

Hon. J. Crofford  
Minister of Community Resources and Employment  
Minister Responsible for Disability Issues  
Minister Responsible for Gaming

Hon. D. Forbes  
Minister of Environment  
Minister Responsible for the Office of Energy Conservation

Hon. D. Higgins  
Minister of Labour  
Minister Responsible for the Status of Women

Hon. J. Nilson  
Minister of Health  
Minister Responsible for Seniors

Hon. P. Prebble  
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. F. Quennell  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. C. Serby  
Deputy Premier

Hon. M. Sonntag  
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs  
Minister of Highways and Transportation

Hon. L. Taylor  
Minister of Government Relations

Hon. A. Thomson  
Minister of Learning  
Minister Responsible for Information Technology

Hon. H. Van Mulligen  
Minister of Finance

Hon. M. Wartman  
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization