



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

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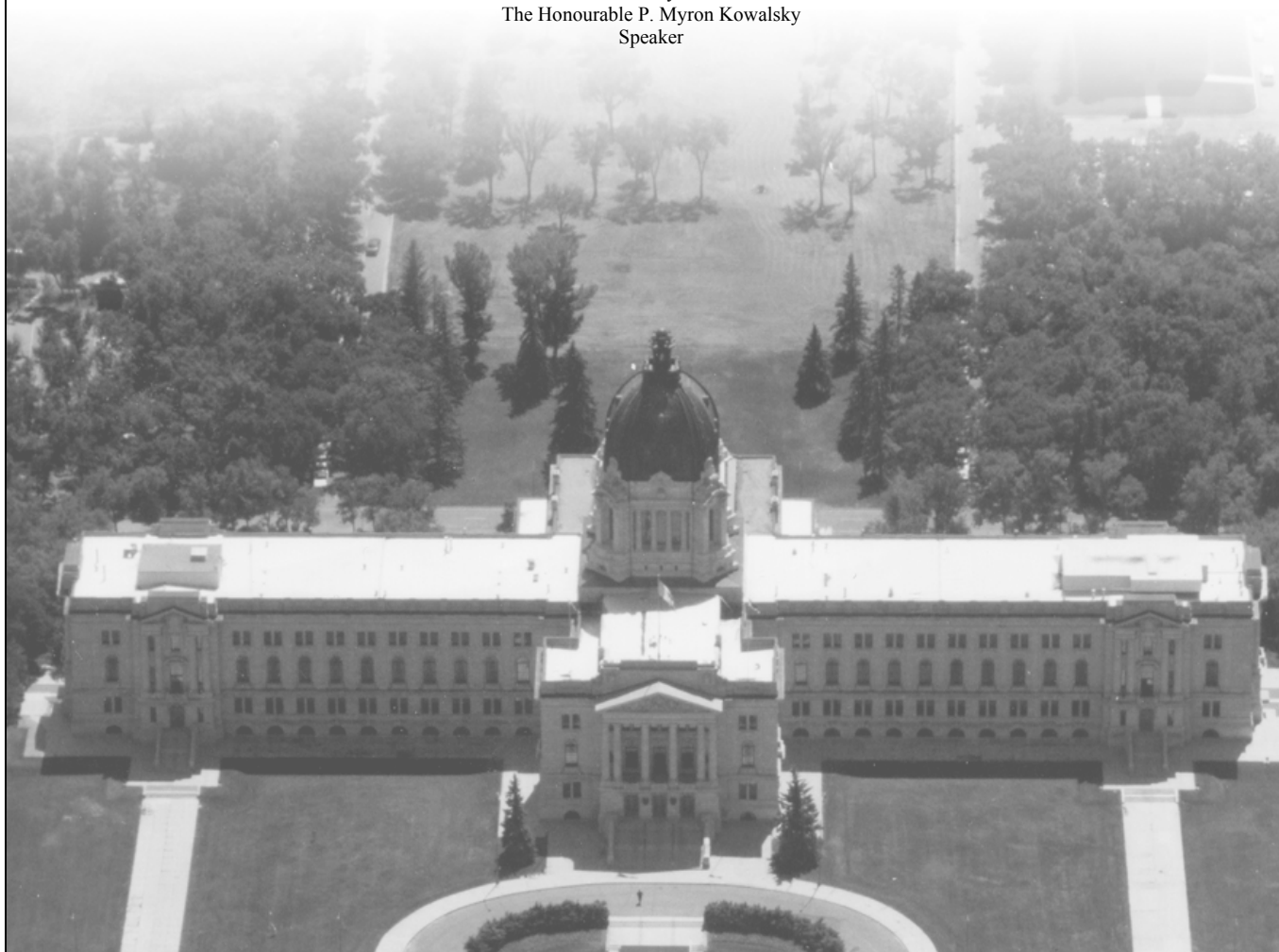
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### PRESENTING PETITIONS

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of my constituents who are concerned about their nursing home.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Red Deer Nursing Home is not closed or further downsized.

The people that have signed this petition are all from Porcupine Plain.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to present a petition signed by citizens concerned with the possible downsizing or closure of the Herbert Nursing Home. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Herbert Nursing Home is not closed or further downsized.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Morse, Herbert, and Rush Lake.

I so present.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents of mine who are very concerned about the downsizing or possible closure of Mainprize Manor & Health Centre in Midale. 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 actions to ensure that Mainprize Manor & Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by folks from Midale and Halbrite.

I so present. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens of southwest Saskatchewan that are extremely concerned about the potential loss of long-term care beds and/or health services. And the petition reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Lafleche & District Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this is signed by good citizens of McCord, Lafleche, and Swift Current.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens opposed to closures or possible reductions of services at Davidson and Imperial health centres.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from Davidson and Martensville.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition from constituents who are opposed to the possible reduction of health care services in Wilkie.

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Wilkie health centre and special care home maintain at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Rockhaven, Phippen, Wilkie, Scott, and Landis.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to

present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan very concerned with the potential health closures. 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 action to ensure that the Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this particular petition is signed by the good folks from Kerrobert, Tramping Lake, and Lloydminster.

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

**Deputy Clerk:** — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and hereby read and received:

New petitions concerning the Radville Marian Health Centre;

A petition concerning the Red Deer Nursing Home; and

A petition concerning centralization of government services in rural communities;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional papers nos. 48, 128, 145, 146, and 158.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 36 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Information Services Corporation: has the land system fee schedule been updated for this fiscal year 2004-2005 and if so, will the minister please table the updated version of this fee schedule?

And, Mr. Speaker, while I am on my feet, second question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 36 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Information Services Corporation: for fiscal year 2004 through 2005 has the lapse procedure review as indicated by the acting registrar, Catherine Benning, in her correspondence been completed? And if so, will the minister please table the results of this review? Thank you.

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 36 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: with regard to the special supplement entitled, Opportunity Saskatchewan, which appeared in the

May 4, 2004 edition of *The Globe and Mail*, how much did the Government of Saskatchewan spend in exchange for the inclusion of the supplement? In which regulation editions of *The Globe and Mail* did the supplement appear? And how many of the articles which appeared were placed for free?

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to members of the House someone who has joined us on the floor of the legislature — a constituent of mine, but I would say a supporter of the Premier's. Dean Findlay is his name. He is a long-time resident of the community of Swift Current where he has been involved in many endeavours, including insurance sales for a time and certainly various aspects of community involvement.

And Dean is a friend and although I know where his political allegiance lie, Mr. Speaker, though, so I am pleased to see today that it looks like he may have crossed the floor and he's sitting with us. But I would ask all members to join me in welcoming Dean Findlay to his Legislative Assembly today.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Prebble:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, through you and to all members of the House I want to introduce 27 grade 8 students from my constituency, from Greystone Heights School. They are grade 8 students visiting the legislature and they're accompanied by their teachers, Michelle Pantel and Dave Eimen. And they're also accompanied, Mr. Speaker, by two chaperones, Martha Hollinger and Val Yuzik. And I'd like to ask all members to warmly welcome them to the legislature.

We hope you have a very good tour of the Assembly, that you enjoy watching question period, and I'm looking forward to meeting with you later on this afternoon. So please help me welcome all of these students and their teachers and chaperones. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Gantfoer:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to ask members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming, in your gallery, Pamela Lavoie and Patricia Gill. They're here today to observe the proceedings in their Assembly, and I would ask all members to please welcome them warmly.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to all members of the legislature 32 grade 4

students from Prince Albert. They've come from the school right close to my home, W.J. Berezowsky School. I've said this I think before to schoolchildren when they've been here — it's where all three of my children started in their kindergarten. And that's many, many years ago though, they're . . . they've all grown up now.

But I want to ask all members to join with me in welcoming these students, along with Wasyl Rybalka, their teacher, and Karen Jaseniuk, who is also here with them. And I'm sure they've got some chaperones around as well. And I look forward to meeting them for drinks and photos after question period. So all members, would you join me in welcoming these folks from P.A. (Prince Albert).

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

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

**Mr. Hagel:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you, and through you to all members of the Assembly, a young man from Moose Jaw who is in the east gallery, Mr. Speaker. He is here at the legislative library doing research and is occupied as a student at the University of Regina in his studies in geology. I'd ask all hon. members to show welcome to Chad Leugner.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member from Meadow Lake.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've just been handed a note, actually. I'm not sure where this individual is, but I would like to introduce the brother of one of my staff from the Thunderchild First Nation. Gerald Okanee works in my office and I understand that his brother, Willard Okanee, is joining us here today. And I'm told he's in the gallery, so would you please join me in welcoming Willard here today.

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

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### Minds Eye Pictures Wins Genie Awards

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we as a group tended to wallow in the dirt. And today I would like to perhaps muddy the waters a little bit more by doing something that this side of the House has not done before, and that's to say something positive about Minds Eye productions.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to lessen or diminish the criticism that this side of the House has made over the financial issues regarding Minds Eye, but I would like to recognize, Mr. Speaker, some of the creative individuals who are responsible for winning two Genie Awards with a film that was produced by Minds Eye production. The film was called *Falling Angels* and it won two Genies: one for the best original song written by Ken Whiteley — the song was called "Tell Me" — and the

other Genie was for art direction, and it was given to Rob Gray and Christina Kuhnigk.

And while the members may disagree on government involvement in businesses, we certainly want to be able to do the appropriate thing and recognize the creative talents that produce this kind of thing. I would like to ask all members to rise and to support that and acknowledge the creative . . . creativity of those people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney.

#### North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every year too many people die and thousands more are injured or become ill in workplace . . . in their workplaces. While we cannot undo their suffering and grief cause by workplace illness, injury, or death, we can try to focus everyone's attention on the importance of preventing injury and illness in the workplace.

This is the goal of the North American Occupational Health and Safety Week or NAOSH (North American Occupational Safety and Health). May 2 to May 8 is the eighth annual NAOSH week in the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Mr. Speaker, this week reminds everyone — employers, workers, and the public — of the critical importance of workplace safety.

I am pleased to report to you that Regina hosted the national launch of NAOSH Week today with a luncheon at the Queensbury Centre in the Exhibition Park. Speakers at this launch were Steven Nicholson and Michael Lovett, both of whom were seriously injured in work-related accidents, Mr. Speaker.

This year's NAOSH theme, Build a Safe Beginning, is very appropriate, because young and first time workers are at greater risk of being injured on the job. For that reason, Mr. Speaker, Michael is speaking at high schools today.

Mr. Speaker, this week reminds us all of the critical importance of workplace safety. Safety is everyone's business, Mr. Speaker, because everyone pays the price where there is a breakdown.

I invite all hon. members to recognize NAOSH week by supporting the efforts to reduce illness, accidents, and death in our workplaces, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

#### Vaccine and Infectious Diseases Organization

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday's editorial in the Saskatoon *StarPhoenix* said it all. It told us why this province is continuing to suffer under this NDP government. It told us why more and more young people are leaving Saskatchewan for other jurisdictions, and it told us why

the NDP's mixed up, misplaced priorities have resulted in a visionless future for this province.

Mr. Speaker, it told us all of this in one headline, "Starving VIDO stupid politics." In this age of bioterrorism, threats, and the increasing risk of infectious diseases like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and West Nile, the University of Saskatchewan's Vaccine And Infectious Diseases Organization, a 30-year research facility, has become a well-respected and productive entity and contributed much to the local and the provincial economies. So says *The StarPhoenix*.

(13:45)

But what worries the head of VIDO more than a possibility of a global outbreak, is the fact that he may not be able to meet payroll and might even be forced to fold on short notice because of severe underfunding and cutbacks, thanks in large part to this NDP (New Democratic Party) government. In fact the article says this facility has literally "been relegated to a hand-to-mouth existence over the past five years."

Let's just tally up some of the NDP . . . some of the costs of the NDP so-called priorities over that period: \$28 million lost in SPUDCO (Saskatchewan Potato Utility Development Corporation); \$14 million in a Georgia dot-com; and most recently 1 million taxpayers' dollars lost on an ethanol plant that never was.

As the editorial goes on to say and the opposition has been saying for years:

. . . what . . . (has become) painfully evident from this case . . . is (that) the government's economic development focus remains . . . short-term and, too . . . "old-economy" orientated.

Mr. Speaker, we couldn't agree more.

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

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

#### Prince Albert YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

**Mr. Borgerson:** — On a much more positive note, Mr. Speaker, on April 30 the Prince Albert YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) Women of Distinction Awards celebrated and recognized eight women whose contributions have enriched our communities.

Mr. Speaker, the work that women do is vital to our families and our society but it's often work that goes unnoticed or is undervalued. This year's recipients have displayed a sustained and significant commitment to our province and have made our society a better place to live and work.

The recipients are, Sonya Jahn, in the category of community enhancement; for cultural enrichment, Ingrid Mateen. In the category of recreation, sport, and active living, Jana Marie Stieb; for business, professional, and entrepreneurship,

Micheline Fedorko. In the arts category, Marjorie Bodnarchuk. The Lifetime Achievement Award went to Luba Crawford from Candle Lake. The Young Woman in Volunteerism recipient is Nicole Hovdebo and the Young Woman of Distinction/Roberta Bondar Scholarship was awarded to Kathryn Kuchapski.

Mr. Speaker, all of the proceeds from this year's banquet will go toward the YWCA residence for women and children program. I'm sure my colleagues will join me in commending the Prince Albert YWCA for the important services it provides for women and in congratulating this year's Women of Distinction recipients.

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

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

#### Mental Health Week in Canada

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday marked the beginning of the 53rd annual Mental Health Week in Canada, and the theme of this year's week is Making Connections. Good mental health is essential to everyone's well-being. It is a sign of a healthy society. Mental health affects every aspect of our daily lives. Our sense of personal well-being has a major impact on our physical health and interaction with others.

There's also a link between physical and mental health. It is reported that 25 per cent of people with serious physical health conditions will develop a major depressive disorder along with their condition. And these other health conditions include diabetes, heart attack, cancer, and strokes.

One in five Canadians, almost 6 million people, are directly affected by mental health issues. And this national awareness week provides Canadians with many opportunities to find out more about the importance of mental health and how to achieve it in our daily lives.

A major component of Mental Health Week 2004 is a month-long art exhibit of works created by talented Canadian artists affected by mental illness. This unique exhibit, entitled *Mindscapes: Visual Art and Mental Illness*, held last year for the first time is taking place at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa during the month of May.

Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. And I hope all members acknowledge this special week and join me in applauding those dealing with this condition.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Walsh Acres.

#### International Youth Week

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, May 1 to May 7 is International Youth Week, a time for us to recognize and celebrate the contributions that young people make to their neighbours and their communities, a time to help build the future for our young people, to provide them with opportunities to express

themselves and to showcase their abilities, talents, and ideas.

Mr. Speaker, all this week there will be a variety of youth-oriented events going on in the city of Regina. There will be forums and presentations covering a number of different topics, from youth justice to thinking globally and acting locally, where young people can listen, learn, and share ideas with others.

Youth Voice, The Exchange, and The Rainbow Youth Centre will all be hosting competitions where kids can showcase their talents in hip hop, breakdancing, and rap. Registration and kickoff of the Spring Basketball League will take place at Scott Collegiate and feature a skills camp, with the University of Regina Cougars available to instruct and assist. The Boys and Girls Clubs of Regina and Street Culture Project are sponsoring a graffiti wall, and there will be an evening of hand clay building at the Pasqua Neighbourhood Centre.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few of the activities going on this week in Regina. I want to recognize the many contributions that young people make to the life of this city. And I thank the many groups, community groups, that have sponsored activities to ensure that International Youth Week is a tremendous success.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Last Mountain . . . pardon me, Arm River-Watrous.

#### **Watrous Girls Win High Honours**

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise in the House today to talk about two remarkable young ladies from Watrous. Jocelyn Kratchmer and Michelle Hagel have been honoured for their recent achievements in the sporting world.

Jocelyn is a proud member of the Perdue Prairie Wild girls hockey team. This team recently won the provincial girls Midget B hockey championship held in Biggar. She and her team went undefeated throughout the playoffs. The combined effort . . . Jocelyn also played for Saskatchewan First Zone 5 team that won the Saskatchewan Hockey Association, Saskatchewan First Female zone tournament in Regina.

Michelle Hagel recently returned home from the Junior Pan Am Games in Puerto Rico where she captured the bronze medal for Canada in judo in the 52 to 57 kg (kilogram) weight class. Michelle successfully fought larger opponents from Brazil, Ecuador, Puerto Rico, and the United States.

The 15-year-old youth had trained hard in judo, but had never imagined she would make the Canadian national team. Michelle has been training in competitions for some time now under coach Ralph Ibanez of the Saskatoon Judo Club and also training under provincial judo coach, Tim Fedorlazarenko, in Prince Albert.

I would ask that the members join me, congratulating Jocelyn Kratchmer and Michelle Hagel for their remarkable sporting achievements. Thank you.

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

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS**

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

#### **Softwood Lumber Tariffs**

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Premier of Saskatchewan. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday a NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) panel ruled that there is no basis for US (United States) tariffs on Canadian softwood lumber. This was a great victory for the Canadian lumber industry and for our own softwood lumber industry, Mr. Speaker.

Both Canadian and US officials say they will soon be resuming talks to end softwood lumber tariffs. Canadian International Trade Minister Jim Peterson plans to meet with his provincial counterparts within the next couple of weeks to discuss Canada's position in these important negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, the point to the Premier today is that we are encouraging him to send a minister to this important meeting and we're offering the Saskatchewan Party's co-operation to make sure that that gets done.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier be sending the minister responsible to represent Saskatchewan at this important forestry meeting?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I am confident with all members of this House, we welcomed the news out of the United States.

I had an opportunity about a week ago to speak to the Prime Minister of Canada as he headed off to meet with the President of the United States. And on the list of agenda items that Saskatchewan proposed be discussed was the matter of softwood lumber, along with the matters, of course, of BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), live swine, and those trade in our natural resources which are so crucial to the people and the province of Saskatchewan and of Canada.

In upcoming meetings, Mr. Speaker, I will want to know some of the detail of that meeting, what is intended to be accomplished at that meeting. If it will serve the people of Saskatchewan, we will ensure that we are represented there and may welcome . . . indeed, may welcome an offer from the opposition to attend as well.

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

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, when there was some word that the federal Canadian minister was interested in meetings with provincial counterparts, the Saskatchewan Party did do a little bit of research. We don't have all those details, but we

have some of them. We know, Mr. Speaker, that . . . we've been advised at least, that the meeting has been tentatively scheduled for May 17 in Ottawa. And, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be important for the Premier's office to be aware of that, to be aware of these other details.

And, most importantly on this issue, when there is a real hope, a real hope that the Canadian softwood lumber industry will be relieved from the burden of unfair US tariffs, Mr. Speaker, when there is that opportunity, that Saskatchewan should be there. Our softwood lumber industry needs that kind of leadership from its government and, frankly, from the opposition.

And so, one more time, we'd just ask the Premier to commit that a minister will be attending this meeting to the extent it is dealing with these . . . with the tariffs and the potential that they soon may end on our lumber industry here in the province of Saskatchewan.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Mr. Speaker, I think as most members will recognize, the Minister of Industry and Resources today is in North Dakota — Minot, North Dakota — along with a member of the opposition, attending an extremely important energy conference which we could be present for.

I want to remind all members that ministers of this government have been at the softwood lumber table from day one, that this province has been represented in Washington to ensure that Saskatchewan interests have been represented in Washington. I am more than confident that the Minister of Industry will have the detail about this, about this opportunity.

And I repeat if it is, if it is possible and we can enjoy the support of the opposition in this, we'll be at that table. Because we've been working from day one and we're very pleased to see the progress that is being made.

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

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

### Complaint Regarding Treatment of Patient

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Thank you. Mr. Speaker, last February Helen Petreny of Regina became ill and was diagnosed with pneumonia. She was given antibiotics but her condition worsened. She was finally admitted to hospital April 2, 2003, but no treatment plan was put in place to treat her condition. After being in hospital almost a month, a biopsy was done on April 30, 2003. The family got the results on May 5 indicating lung cancer, and Mrs. Petreny passed away the following day.

Mrs. Petreny's family believes that she was not properly diagnosed, nor was her deteriorating condition treated in an appropriate and timely manner. So her two daughters, Pamela Lavoie and Patricia Gill, wrote to the Minister of Health on June 3, 2003 requesting an investigation. The minister replied July 2, 2003, assuring the family that he would indeed

investigate through the health authority and let them know the outcome.

To date, nine months later, the family is still waiting for that response. The minister said he would look into the matter. Yet if he has, he has not contacted the family. When can this family expect a reply?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the legislature express condolences to the family of the individual involved. These particular matters that raise issues about some of the staff and some of the physicians involved are normally referred to the College of Physicians and Surgeons. I am not aware of all of the circumstances around this particular case, and I will look at that. But the normal course would be that they would be referred to the College for an appropriate investigation.

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

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, this session the Saskatchewan Party has raised a number of individual health care cases. On these occasions, the Minister of Health has repeatedly asked us to contact his office directly, and I quote:

I encourage the members opposite to raise these cases with the appropriate authorities or with my office so we can deal with them there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, Pamela Lavoie and Patricia Gill did just that. They followed the exact steps the minister asked them to take. They even contacted the quality care coordinator for their health district.

In the minister's letter dated July 2, 2003 he writes, and I quote:

. . . officials with the Regina Qu'Appelle Regional Health Authority have been asked to look into your concerns, and once their review is complete (d), a response will be sent to you.

Mr. Speaker, how long does it take the get a response?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, the particular file . . . I do not have the information with me today. As the member opposite knows, I have often encouraged him to give me some of that question before we show up here, then I can provide the information here. I will do that, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the members opposite that this is a complex system that we run in this province. It includes 4,500,000 doctor contacts in a year with patients in this province. If some of these go awry or there are some problems, we have procedures and whole organizations whose job it is to make sure that those things are dealt with.

We'll continue to work hard to deal with all of these particular



issues. And on this particular one, I will go and see what has caused the problem. But practically, Mr. Speaker, we are going to make sure we have good health care for all of our people in this province.

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

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister had this information for the last nine months. He doesn't need me to bring it to his attention before question period.

(14:00)

Mr. Speaker, the minister keeps asking people to bring these matters to his attention. In a letter to the minister, Patricia . . . Pamela Lavoie writes, quote:

I am both saddened and angry to the extent that my mother suffered in our search for adequate health care . . . Is this . . . (inaudible) . . . a reasonable expectation of what the average Saskatchewan resident might encounter when accessing health care today?

First the family wanted timely treatment for their mother and then they asked questions from the minister after their mother passed away. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they got neither. This family deserves answers. It deserves answers in a timely way. In fact, they deserved them a long time ago. The minister has let this family down. He didn't keep his word to them when he promised them he would get back to them. Will he respond to this family today?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, as indicated previously, I will be looking into this particular matter.

But what I would remind the member opposite and all of his colleagues is that we will continue to look at and deal with the problems that they raise. And we will continue to do that. I also, though, encourage them to provide information to my office and not be in a situation where they'll, in effect, grandstand about some of these particular operations because, Mr. Speaker, we have to work with the 30,000-plus employees that work in the health care system. And that is a very large challenge, in and of itself.

But I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, we are always going to be making sure that we respond to the individuals and the families involved in the best way and the most caring way possible. That's our solution in this province, and we are going to continue to do that.

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

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

**Mr. Gantefoer:** — Mr. Speaker, Pamela Lavoie and Patricia Gill are wondering why it takes almost a year in order for a

review of a patient's case from this minister's office to be addressed. They want answers for two reasons, Mr. Speaker: number one, to bring closure to their mother's passing; and number two, to prevent similar events from happening to other families. They are concerned that other people may have died or suffered because care was not administered in a timely fashion.

Mr. Speaker, the investigation the minister promised to this family will not only have answers for them, it should also shed light on the issues that are raised by their mother's death so that other families will not be subjected to the same concern. And the best the minister can do is make lame excuses why he hasn't responded to them for nine full months, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister commit to meeting with this family after question period and provide them with answers as to why he hasn't contacted them for nine months?

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

**Hon. Mr. Nilson:** — Mr. Speaker, if I heard correctly what the member opposite said, when he read the letter that I don't have in front of me, he said that this matter was referred to the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority where they would be investigating this and getting back to the family.

Now what I will do is find out whether the response was forwarded or not or whether there's some challenge there. But what I remind the member opposite is that we have many, many capable people, caring people who work within this health care system, and their job is to provide the best care possible for each and every individual who requires that care in the system.

But we know that there are going to be mistakes. Our colleagues in Alberta just recently did a survey and they had a concern that about 14 per cent of their patients ended up with some kind of an error within the hospital system. And they are tackling the issue of how you deal with that.

In Saskatchewan, we have a Health Quality Council. One of their roles is to look at the broader issues and try to deal with some of these concerns. We are concerned about it; we're doing something about it.

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

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

### Amalgamating School Divisions

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Learning admitted yesterday that he'll soon be announcing that they'll be forcing amalgamation of school divisions. It begs the question why.

Why does the NDP have to step in and interfere with this process which is already happening without the government? Over the past number of years, voluntary amalgamation has been taking place. In fact, the number of school divisions has gone from 119 to 82. That's a decrease of over 30 per cent. Mr. Speaker, what . . . why will the government step in and start forcing amalgamation, when school divisions have been doing

this on their own over the last number of years?

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well certainly, Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize the fact that over the last decade there has been a 30 per cent reduction in the number of school divisions. I think all of those people who are familiar with the system will know that the course of voluntary amalgamations has largely run its course.

What we are now at a point of needing to do is to set new parameters and new guidelines to allow divisions to come together and to achieve organizational efficiencies through greater size. That's certainly one of the recommendations in the Boughen report. I know the members opposite talk about it all the time and it's one of the things I'm sure that they would support.

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

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, four years ago the minister then, Jim Melenchuk, set a target for reducing the number of school divisions by 25 per cent. Since that time the number has been reduced by nearly 20 per cent, and the Saskatchewan school board association is currently working on amalgamations that would reduce the number of school boards by another 10 to 15. In other words, Mr. Speaker, school boards have met the minister's requirements of 25 per cent over the last 4 years.

Why is the minister now stepping in and forcing amalgamations when school divisions have done it on their own time frame with the partners they wanted to in the time frame the government had asked them to do? Why would the government step in now and force amalgamation when school divisions are still working on amalgamations? It's not a finished deal yet; they're working on them. Why are you going to force it now?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, as I have identified, the course of voluntary amalgamation, the option that we had pursued with the school boards towards voluntary amalgamation, has largely run its course. It has largely run its course; there are very, very few divisions currently in amalgamation discussions.

If we are going to get this system to a point of sustainability; if we are going to be able to come to an assessment per student that is relatively uniform across this province — not the 25 times the wealth in some divisions that there is in others — if we are going this back into line; if we're going to make the system sustainable so that as new money's put into it, it is headed into the classroom, so we deal with the phenomena of the 18 . . . zero grant boards, we need to deal with restructuring, and that means dealing with amalgamation.

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

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister is absolutely wrong. Amalgamation is not at its end, they're still working on it and there will still be further amalgamations as we continue on.

I believe that this is nothing more than a diversionary tactic by the NDP. A diversionary tactic because the Premier had promised lower property taxes and he's broken that promise. So what they decided to do is let's change the subject completely. Let's talk and start picking a fight with school boards regarding forced amalgamation so the Premier doesn't have to stand up and say once again that we can't do anything about lowering property tax even though that's what he promised in his leadership campaign, and that's what he promised in the last provincial election, Mr. Speaker. This is nothing more than a diversionary tactic.

School divisions on their own through amalgamation are finding efficiencies but they're doing it on their own time frame. Why does the Premier have to step in now, and the Minister of Learning step in now, and try and divert people's attention from his lack of ability to keep promises and force it over on to school board amalgamations?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — It may serve to interest members in some of the facts. I appreciate the rhetoric of the member opposite, but in fact let me read to you what it was that the Premier and this party promised. We said:

Quality . . . (education) public education requires a sound funding base. The challenge is to raise those funds in a fair (and) balanced way. We want to ensure we do that while making Saskatchewan property taxes as fair as possible.

That's why . . . (the) independent commission is assessing . . . (the) complex issue.

. . . (We) know that Saskatchewan can't afford (the) extreme, reckless tax cuts. Our past reviews have brought balance and fairness to personal (income) and business taxes. (And) we'll do the same for property taxes.

A core piece of this is restructuring to ensure we have relative uniformity in the assessment per student, so that we deal with the zero grant boards, so we make sure that every board gets government funding so that we can make sure that the students in this province have the best possible services in the fairest way. That's what we promised, that's what we'll deliver.

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

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

**Mr. McMorris:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's review what the Premier really has said. In his election campaign he said that

the provincial government would have no trouble absorbing the Boughen Commission within its resources that it had available to itself.

Instead what they've done is they've raised the PST (provincial sales tax), completely forgot about education, which was explained in the Boughen Commission, if you raise the PST at least that could go to offset property tax, which the Premier had promised. They raise the PST, forget everything about the promise on property tax, and now they try and divert the issue over to amalgamation.

Why don't they deal with the issues that they set out at SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and every other convention that the Premier talked about on property tax, is the fact that they'd be lowering it. They're doing nothing but dividing the attention over to amalgamation . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. Order. Order. Order. And would the member go directly to his question please.

**Mr. McMorris:** — Mr. Speaker, the question is: will the Premier live up to his promise, lower property taxes, and quit the forced amalgamation agenda?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Let's understand this, Mr. Speaker. In the fall election the Boughen report had not yet reported. There was no recommendation to increase the PST and expand it. What the Premier was referring to was our desire to deal with, as our election platform says, restoring fairness and equity.

The member opposite should stick to the facts rather than the rhetoric, and that will improve the quality of debate in this House.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please. Order. Order, please. I recognize the member from Cypress Hills.

#### Public Sector Investment in High-Risk Projects

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, my question today is for the Minister Responsible for Investment Saskatchewan. This morning there was yet another report about massive losses in the NDP's disastrous investment portfolio. And according to information obtained by CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) television, the NDP government has gambled about \$40 million of taxpayers' money on 70 high-risk business investments around the province.

Now the NDP says that that's how they plan to grow Saskatchewan. Well as it turns out, the NDP's high-risk business gamble has cost taxpayers about \$23 million in losses. Mr. Speaker, will the minister explain how gambling \$40 million on high-risk business ventures and losing nearly \$24 million of that amount is somehow good for Saskatchewan families?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer the question today on behalf of the Minister of Industry and Resources. I have in my briefing note a response that says this, that as you know, many of these investments are long-aged; some of them are over 25 years old. And why they are such, Mr. Speaker, is that even the previous administration before this one made a lot of investment in high-risk, of which the Leader of the Opposition would know something about.

And what happened, Mr. Speaker, of course is that these investments today have all gone, Mr. Speaker, to be managed by private investment companies, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the members opposite today, just talk to the financial institutions in the province. Talk to ACRE (Action Committee on the Rural Economy) or talk to Agrivision. And they'll say to you on every account that there needs to be some private and public sector investment in high-risk areas, of which the previous administration did, in which this one did, of which you guys say you don't believe in, but . . . of which that opposition said they don't believe in, Mr. Speaker.

But I never hear one word from the member from Canora where we have investment in hog barns, Mr. Speaker, which is private-public, Mr. Speaker. And I never hear anything about Centennial Foods from the Saskatoon people, where you have public-private investment . . .

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

I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome that member back to the House, but unfortunately absence hasn't made his logic any better.

Mr. Speaker, the news on CBC TV last night was bad enough. The NDP has lost another \$24 million of taxpayers' money at 60 per cent of the original investment. And that was done on the string of money-losing investments through its new investment company called Investment Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, I think the worst is yet to come because while the business losses from the last four years continue to pile up, the NDP has decided to put another \$200 million of taxpayers' money into high-risk business ventures over the next four years. Mr. Speaker, the NDP has managed to gamble and lose 60 per cent of the \$40 million they've already invested. How much is the NDP willing to lose on the \$200 million it's going to gamble in the next four years?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — The Minister of Industry and Resources a couple of days ago was very clear, that you have today, soon, a private sector board that will be managing the affairs of the \$200 million investments of the future. And there isn't anybody

in Saskatchewan today except the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, who believe that you can build Saskatchewan alone without any public investment in it, because we hear that from all of the people who have studied rural Saskatchewan today and Saskatchewan investment about the importance of having public investment.

(14:15)

And pick the investments across the province, Mr. Speaker. Just a couple of days ago there was a huge announcement here of ATCO investing \$250 million in a power project in Saskatchewan, alongside a Saskatchewan corporation, a Crown corporation. A public-private investment, Mr. Speaker, in his constituency, Mr. Speaker. And we'll see more of those kinds of investments in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, because to grow Saskatchewan's economy and future it requires a blended approach with private and public sector.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, not only is the member's logic faulty, so is his geographic knowledge of the province. That investment he's talking about is not in Cypress Hills, it's in another constituency.

Mr. Speaker, officials at the NDP's investment company, Investment Saskatchewan, are trying to downplay the NDP's ...

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, officials at the NDP investment company, Investment Saskatchewan, are trying to downplay their \$24 million loss. In fact vice-president of Investment Saskatchewan, Zach Douglas, says that we shouldn't look at the investment losses in the NDP's small-business portfolio in isolation. He suggests that we look at the NDP's overall performance.

Well, Mr. Speaker, let's do that. Investment Saskatchewan manages a portfolio worth approximately \$600 million. And according to their 2003 annual report, that organization — Investment Saskatchewan — earned a grand total of \$7.5 million on a \$600 million investment. Mr. Speaker, that's just about 1 per cent on a \$600 million investment.

So will the minister today admit that the NDP's small-business investment strategy is a disaster and that the overall investment strategy is a business embarrassment?

**Hon. Mr. Serby:** — Mr. Speaker, it has been the historical presence of governments in Saskatchewan to invest in high-risk business ventures. That's been historical, Mr. Speaker.

When the opposition ... a member of the opposition sat in confidence with some of his colleagues in the past, they invested a great deal in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. This government has invested in high-risk portfolios and in the future that will be done, Mr. Speaker, by venture capital folks.

But I want to say, Mr. Speaker, what I heard from the member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, last Wednesday, where he said, Mr. Speaker, that we need to go back and have a course in 101 marketing in Saskatchewan because he doesn't know what the advantages in Saskatchewan are today in marketing our province, Mr. Speaker. And how is it that we have a member of the opposition, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Saskatchewan Party, a Saskatchewan Party today, who doesn't know what the advantages in our province are?

We have an inhibitor in Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, about growing the province. It's the Saskatchewan Party, Mr. Speaker, that's the inhibitor.

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

**The Speaker:** — Order, please. Order, please, members. Order.

### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

#### Bill No. 43 — The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 43, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 43, The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act 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. Quennell:** — 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. 44 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister for Government Relations that Bill No. 44, The Municipal Revenue

Sharing 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. Taylor:** — Next sitting of the House.

**The Speaker:** — Next sitting.

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

**Bill No. 45 — The Planning and Development  
Amendment Act, 2004**

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion's carried.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — 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. 46 — The Northern Municipalities  
Amendment Act, 2004**

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of

Government Relations that Bill No. 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — 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. 47 — The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2004**

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 47, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 47, The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Next sitting of the House, 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. 48 — The Vehicle Administration  
Amendment Act, 2004**

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've almost forgotten how to do this. But I'd like to move that Bill No. 48, The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Highways and Transportation, Bill No. 48, The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — 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.

#### STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

##### Remarks Out of Order

**The Speaker:** — Members of the Assembly, before orders of the day I just would like to bring a matter to your attention.

I've had the opportunity to review remarks made on page 875 of *Hansard* yesterday, where the member from Wood River commented about a phone call that the member received from a parent and at least two children.

In those remarks the member indirectly implied that another member was dishonourable. I would like to remind all members that such remarks bring disrepute to the legislature and damage to this institution. That is, any time when a member implies improper motives or actions to another person in this legislature, such remarks are out of order.

For the greater good I ask all members to treat all other members as honourable. And I might add that members should apply this convention as well, that is they should consider all members as being honourable in the heckling that goes on across the floor.

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 255 through 258 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 255, 256, 257, and 258 have been submitted.

Order, please, members. Order, please, members. Would the members please come to order so we can conduct the business of the House. Once again I would ask the Clerk to repeat.

I recognize the Government Whip.

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable questions no. 259 through 263 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Questions 259, 260, 261, 262, and 263 have been converted to orders for return (debatable).

#### GOVERNMENT ORDERS

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

##### Bill No. 1

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 1 — The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour and a privilege to begin the debate again on Bill No. 1, The Financial Administration Act.

Mr. Speaker, it's been about three weeks since the Minister of Finance introduced Bill No. 1, and during that course of three weeks, as the official opposition's Finance critic, I've had the opportunity to ask a number of questions of the Finance officials to determine exactly what was meant with some of the wordings and whether or not the intent of a number of the clauses were as actually requested by Finance officials.

And I want to thank the Minister of Finance for allowing the three officials from his department to meet with me last Thursday and spend some time discussing all of the clauses of the Bill. It was very helpful, Mr. Speaker, to be able to go over each of the Bills . . . each of the clauses to get an understanding as to what was intended in the actual draft that's put forward.

Mr. Speaker, as has been indicated in this Assembly many times in the past, the official opposition, along with the Provincial Auditor, has recommended that the province of Saskatchewan move forward and begin to get in line with all of the other provinces in Canada and follow the production of a budget for the province of Saskatchewan on what is referred to as a summary financial budgeting.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the government has indicated that they've prepared summary financial documents before, and they're correct because summary financial documents have always been produced after year-end, about three or four months after that, where we have a chance, where the public has the opportunity, to review the public accounts of government to get a clear understanding of the entire financial picture of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, what has been missing though is that as we look . . . As in the past where we have had presented in this

Assembly, a General Revenue Fund budget — the GRF budget as it's often referred to — we're only getting an opportunity to see about 60 per cent of the province's economy.

So the move by the Government of Saskatchewan to adopt new accounting standards . . . And as we know, Mr. Speaker, it's very, it's sometimes very convoluted when you look at remarks made by accounting firms and the terminology they use to get a clear understanding of what is actually meant. And when we hear the words, generally accepted accounting principles, or GAAP as is often referred to in accounting documents, we must understand that those are accounting principles that have been put forward by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants. This is a cross-Canada group of accountants that have looked at the need to ensure that, first of all, that there is, that there is transparency, that there is accountability, and that indeed everything is accurate that is put forward before the people of a respective province or of the nation as a whole, the country of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, what has happened in the past number of years has I think shaken the accounting industry to a great degree, when we've seen the difficulties that have been put, that has . . . that Enron has created for North America, when we see the difficulties that Parmalat created. And now of course we're seeing some of the things that are occurring to the industry, represented by Nortel.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that a reputable accounting firm has had to — I'll use the term — sign off on the documents of Nortel. And then after concerns were raised, they again have to sign off on the revised documents, the revised numbers that were produced.

(14:30)

And it's only a week or so ago, Mr. Speaker, that you recall that the chief financial officer of Nortel and two other individuals were again released from employment for Nortel, having . . . the suggestion is that the numbers that they produced in fact were not correct, that there was no profit at Nortel. And as a result now, an accounting firm is going to have to look at a third set of numbers and sign off that in fact these numbers are correct.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there's no intent here to suggest that the accounting firm isn't doing the right thing because they have to work with the documents that are presented to them. And that's the challenge that many accountants and many accounting firms face when they receive from a business, from a government, a department, a Crown corporation, they receive the documents from those entities, and under accounting guidelines, under the generally accepted accounting principles, they do an audit. And that audit then verifies that those numbers were correct according to what was given to them.

But what we're . . . what we have seen in the last, those three examples that I have highlighted, Mr. Speaker, is that sometimes when malice is intended and someone does not want to indeed provide accurate information, they can get away with it for a while. In the end obviously it has been shown — at least I hope it has been shown — that officials who have misled the people of Canada and North America in the Enron case, in the Parmalat case, and now in the Nortel case will indeed be held

accountable by the law because those are the dire consequences that people face when they start to deal with those kinds of things.

So when we start to look at The Financial Administration Act and how it's going to devise a system for the province of Saskatchewan for all of our General Revenue Fund accounting, for all of our departmental accounting, for the various Crown corporations, the agencies, there needs to be — above all — not just a true, transparent form of accounting, but there has to be the perception that this in fact is accurate, that the numbers that we see presented in this Assembly are in fact accurate numbers.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this Bill moves in that direction. And there are some concerns that we have identified. And in discussion with Finance officials, we're concerned that a number of provinces — Saskatchewan included — have not decided to entrench in the legislative Act that indeed the accounting . . . the Public Sector Accounting Board that recommends these principles are in fact the principles that we will follow. That's not part of this Act, and it's not part of a number of provinces.

The province of British Columbia has moved to actually put that clause in an Act. And it specifically states that the accounting principles that are going to be followed by the province of British Columbia in putting forward its public accounts, in putting forward its budget, in putting forward the summary financial statements that it will produce will in fact follow the generally accepted accounting principles as identified by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a concern there that maybe it's time that Saskatchewan also moved in this direction to ensure that it's not just talked about, it's not just understood that this would be something that is followed, but in fact it will be required by the Act that these are the principles. I am waiting for some response from the province of British Columbia to see how they have written that clause that enables the province of British Columbia to look at those sections.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has indicated in his comments on April 14 that there were a number of things in this Bill that were housekeeping in nature: changing the terminology and reference to the general . . . the Consolidated Fund to the General Revenue Fund. And those are of course things that we're not going to spend a lot of time discussing in adjourned debates or in committee when we actually begin to look at each of the sections of the Act.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the . . . one of the very first sections deals with is section no. 5. And there are three or four sections that are substantive in this Bill, that actually make changes to the principles that have been followed before. Section no. 5 changes and produces a new section 13.1 that allows for net budgeting. Mr. Speaker, these are I think plans that show that the government needs to be able to be efficient. It needs to be able to allow departments to work with other departments, so what we see put forward is net budgeting.

Mr. Speaker, section no. 6, which will produce a new section called 14.1 of the Act, is one that we have already looked at a couple of times when we debated the interim supply Bill here in

the Legislative Assembly. We have had two interim supply Bills, one that was asked for the appropriation of one-twelfth of the revenue for this year and another appropriation Act that asks for two-twelfths.

Mr. Speaker, what section no. 6 does is put in place . . . that based on the previous estimates of the previous year, there will be an automatic passing or granting . . . I should say not passing, but it will be the granting of one-twelfth expenditure of the previous estimates immediately upon introduction of the budget.

So what this does, Mr. Speaker, is it ensures that departments can proceed with operating in the month of April because of course many a time March 31 we haven't had the opportunity as an Assembly to pass an interim supply Bill. So I think that this will allow for a more efficient operation and an operation that doesn't have as much confusion about whether or not Bills will be paid on April 1.

What it also does, Mr. Speaker, is that it ensures that it is only on programs of the previous budget . . . the estimates of the past year and also only those estimates that are still in effect. And the question that I asked of the officials was what if programs are cancelled. And as we saw in this current budget when we saw programs, especially in the agricultural department, where expenditures for the new fiscal year in fact have been cancelled and as a result of programs being cancelled. And of course it is understood — and the Act has indicated — that those estimates of the previous year would not apply to expenditures where a program has been cancelled or a program has been reduced because of the elimination of part of it. So while it allows for, I believe a consistency in operation and it allows for stability, it does address the withdrawal of program.

As well as, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note as well — and I think accurately — that that granting of that one-twelfth appropriation will not involve new programs that the budget introduces. There's still must an interim supply that will grant expenditures for new programs that have been introduced in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, section 7 is the part of the Act that I've indicated where I believe there can be some improvement to it, and I'm hopeful that the minister will look at some of the suggestions that I make and consider them when we get to committee. I think it's important in this section where the existing provision identified the certain things that financial statements must contain.

As a result of the change now, there is a deletion or a removal of that section, and it refers only to the chief controller being responsible for the public sector generally accepted accounting principle as put forward by the Public Sector Accounting Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think that this section can be improved whereby it would actually state that the province of Saskatchewan, in its preparation of all the documents, must follow the Act. And as I indicated in my opening remarks, we're going to be waiting for the Act that is in place in British Columbia and to try to identify whether or not that would improve the situation. We don't want to look at putting in place

a clause or clauses that won't improve the situation. What we want to do is ensure that the Act becomes stronger, becomes more transparent, and in fact ensures that the accounting principles that are followed in all the departments, in all the Crown Corporations, in all the agencies will be those as indicated through the Act.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I've indicated there are a number of sections that follow in sections 8, 9, and 10 where the reference is to the new accounting standards. We see the change in section no. 11 where the amount of money that is to be remitted was under the old system \$1,000, and now that is being increased to \$5,000. So those are more in line with keeping with the current numbers that the Act requires for the job to be done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, one of the concerns that we've had as the information technology has taken hold and we move towards payments being done . . . And I'm sure many people now don't write cheques for everything they do, and they don't pay bills necessarily from a piece of paper that is produced for them. They may do a combination of things — things that are produced wireless and are through the Internet. And one of the concerns that was noted within the department was that a payment requisition, within quotation marks, is a lot different than requisition for the payment. And it seemed to be understood that payment requisition meant that there had to be a hard copy signed for someone . . . to authorize someone to in fact pay a bill. As a result of the change and how things are handled through computers and through accounting principles, we understand that of course requisition for the payment could be a number of things. It could be an e-mail. It could still be a traditional bill, and it can be the billing of one department to another department as this Act allows.

So, Mr. Speaker . . . or Deputy Speaker, in conclusion, as I've indicated we've had an opportunity to review a number of the Bills. I've had an opportunity to discuss each and every clause with officials. And I'm quite convinced that the intent of all of these sections is to improve and to change Saskatchewan to a system that other provinces have been following. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, until I have had the opportunity to receive the information from British Columbia, to have a better understanding of whether or not we can in fact improve one of the sections to ensure that there would be no possibility of not actually following the generally accepted accounting principles, I would like some opportunity to wait for that information. So at this time I would move that we adjourn debate.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Speaker:** — That is carried.

Debate adjourned.

## Bill No. 2

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 2 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second



time.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill No. 2, An Act to amend The Power Corporation Act. At first glance this Bill appears to clarify SaskPower's current exclusive franchise to transmit and sell electricity in Saskatchewan. But it certainly opens up an area that is . . . speaks wider than just the Bill and the many changes in this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, it really speaks to the intent of the government. What we saw during the election was the government making promises about keeping utility rates the lowest in Saskatchewan. And as we have seen, the government has reneged on that promise, really during the election misled the province in its attempt. The member from Saskatoon Nutana says, well that wasn't really a promise; it was a promise over four years. Well, Mr. Speaker, that was very unacceptable to make that promise during the campaign and then renege on the promise right after the election, Mr. Speaker.

(14:45)

What we need in this province is a plan by the government to grow the province economically, attract more people to the province, and this government doesn't understand that. And the government wants to basically give exclusive rights to the Crowns to grow this province. And it's been shown widely across the world that that's not the only vehicle of growth to grow the economy in Canada and across the world.

The Crowns have a very important role in Saskatchewan and will continue to have a very important role in Saskatchewan. But I don't believe that anyone in Saskatchewan believes that the Crowns should have an exclusive right for economic growth, or the government in this province should have the exclusive right to be the only player in the field to grow the economy in this province. As we've seen that the government has fallen badly. They have failed again and again and again.

And it's interesting that this Bill talks about giving exclusive rights to SaskPower. Well, Mr. Speaker, when the government, the NDP government, expands the mandate of the Crowns to go out into the world to compete, there's some very obvious failures. And I'd just like to point out two that . . . huge failures that SaskPower was a part of.

The first one was . . . well really the classic mismanagement was Channel Lake. The NDP government lost about \$15 million. And just as a bit of a background, 1997 Channel Lake Petroleum, a subsidiary of SaskPower, began trading natural gas futures on extremely thin margins. This practice was unauthorized, resulted in about \$10 million losses for the company which were not disclosed in the SaskPower annual report for 1997.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Channel Lake Petroleum was then sold in an attempt to further hide those losses. However it was actually sold for \$5 million less than SaskPower planned because the negotiators didn't read the final contract. And it's bizarre how many things could go wrong because of the

ineptitude of the government and its officials. And all the while, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Jack Messer, the then president of SaskPower at the time, had resigned, taking with him a \$300,000 severance package.

Now the other classic mismanagement of SaskPower that was forced upon SaskPower by the government was Guyana. In that enterprise, the people of Saskatchewan lost about \$2 million. Now in 1997, SaskPower thought it would be a good idea to invest at least \$31 million in a broken-down, decrepit power company in Guyana, a small country in South America.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, SaskPower spent millions researching this purchase and actually signed an intention-to-purchase document. At the same time, in Saskatchewan, SaskPower was cancelling rural underground development program and taking a \$2 reconstruction fee on to everyone's power bills. Prior to the final purchase, civil unrest broke out in Guyana, a result of massive voter fraud in that country's elections and in . . . finally in 1998 SaskPower pulled the plug on this project.

Now my point of pointing out those two disastrous investments . . . to what SaskPower and this NDP government are doing in the province, Mr. Speaker, through this Bill, this Bill to amend, Bill No. 2 . . . And, Mr. Speaker, as we have seen, whenever the NDP have to actually go out and compete in the real world, they are unable to do that. They are unable to compete in the real world where other . . . against other companies, other jurisdictions. But in Saskatchewan what they do is to give total control to their Crown corporation.

Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there's no way that the, that the Crown corporation having exclusive rights in the province can't be successful. There's no competition. And this Bill really makes . . . gives SaskPower more exclusive rights concerning transmission and selling electricity.

But at the end of the day, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the people of Saskatchewan lose by not opening up competition in the marketplace in this province. What we see is the NDP policies failing — failing the people of Saskatchewan economically; failing, failing to grow the province; failing to attract more people to this province.

And, Mr. Speaker, as we continue investigating this, the NDP are talking about having a lowest possible price of utilities in the province. But I'd like to point out an article in the *Leader-Post* that was Saturday, April 3, where Gord Gunoff, the business manager for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers that represents 1,300 electrical workers . . . and he says that, that he wasn't waiting until . . . in his negotiations with the government on his union contract, the government pointed out that there was going to be, among other things, increases in electrical power rates that are likely not too distant future. And such increases would be unacceptable and without merit, according to Mr. Gunoff.

And he also goes on to say that he believes ways could be found to save money and avoid power rate increases. More specifically, Mr. Gunoff said he believes that SaskPower should be amalgamated with SaskEnergy. Such an amalgamation would produce efficiency, reduce the amount of management

and duplication of such key departments as the human resources department in the two corporations.

So it's interesting that there are people in the NDP circles that have other views about how to create efficiencies and economic development in this province. But as we've seen, this government continues to ignore them. And all this NDP government can do is just put more control and power into their own hands.

It seems like the NDP government really . . . NDP party really believes that the Crown corporations of this province belongs to them. Well I'd just like to point out, Mr. Speaker, the Crown corporations of this province belong to the people of Saskatchewan, not to the NDP. And they have to realize that when they make decisions for the good of all people in the province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, there are certainly many concerns when we look at the way the NDP government runs the Crowns. What we need in this province, Mr. Speaker, is a strategy to grow this province. What we need in this province is another million people; we need 2 million people in this province. We've been at . . . stuck at 1 million, or now we've even dropped below 1 million.

And the members on the opposite side have been quoted as saying, well maybe it wouldn't be . . . a candidate I believe in the last election for the NDP said, well it wouldn't be such a bad thing to have the population go down to 600,000 or 800,000 people. And it seems bizarre that such thinking prevails in the NDP Party when we need to grow this province and develop this province and attract more people.

Why do we want to attract more people? We want to attract taxpayers; we want to attract business to this province who will hire people. The businesses will pay taxes in this province. They will hire people, and their workers will pay more taxes, Mr. Speaker, and so that the government of the day will have the tax base to increase spending on education, on health care. But this government doesn't see it that way. All that they want to do is have control of everything. They want to control the economy and run it as if it's their own. And what we have to do in this province is to find other ways to grow this province, not exclusively within the NDP Party and the way they view the world, Mr. Speaker.

It's interesting to note, when we talk about power generation, that there's other forms of power generation. But the NDP Party they always want to get control of it. What we need is to encourage private investment in power generation and allow the private companies or individuals that have windmills or produce . . . or, as an example, Weyerhaeuser in the North, to produce their own power. But instead, what does the government do? They . . . any savings Weyerhaeuser was going to get from producing their own power, they were going to take away those savings, and again not encourage that type of investment, that type of power generation that would be good for the whole province.

We see many a number of First Nations groups that are very interested in something that SaskPower has been interested in, and that's a nuclear power plant. It's interesting that when we

talk to First Nations they don't want to see more dams being built across the North, or in Saskatchewan, because it ruins so much of the province's resources, the lands. And they have certainly been in the forefront of looking at nuclear power generation, as SaskPower has.

And what we need is a public-private partnership to investigate things like cogeneration, nuclear power, and other forms of power that unfortunately for the NDP government, it may not be under their total control. But it would be under control of the people of Saskatchewan, for the benefit of the people of Saskatchewan. And that's the way that we need to produce jobs in this province, and economic development in this province, Mr. Speaker.

As we see in certain selective areas, the NDP government do allow other forms of deregulation in the market. As we see, the cities of Saskatoon and Swift Current are allowed to purchase electricity from other suppliers than SaskPower. But it seems this NDP government is just stuck to very isolated examples. And what we need in this province, to expand the thinking of private-public partnerships in the province to generate electricity and to really encourage the private sector, with the public sector, with SaskPower and other Crowns, to grow the province more efficiently. And, Mr. Speaker, as we see, the government continues to just kind of jump in and scare away private investors whenever possible and try to take over those areas that the private sector could do a better job, or possibly with the public sector.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think as an example that I mentioned before, the First Nations are really a source of economic development in this province. I believe, Mr. Speaker, that they're an untapped resource in a number of ways. And as we see the First Nations of Saskatchewan get their treaty land entitlement and other settlements are coming along, they have a huge source of capital that they want to invest in this province. And we as a province need to tap into that capital and for the good of the whole province, and so that everyone in this province can benefit.

Now, Mr. Speaker, also the First Nations are a huge supply of talent and for the future workforce. And we must, Mr. Speaker, make sure that we adequately address the First Nations concerns when it comes to education and training so we can utilize not only their capital and the people power, so that we as a province can move forward in this . . . and take advantage of the future developments that are out there and that's needed, Mr. Speaker.

When we talk about power generation, we see that SaskPower is buying power; they buy power from Manitoba. Why would it be a problem to expand that and buy power that's generated in Saskatchewan from cogeneration projects or other projects that have been talked about on the Saskatchewan River, that have been turned down by the government because they don't have total control over that? And if they don't have total control, they're not interested, Mr. Speaker.

And so we certainly have to have a strategy in this province to utilize all the people in this province, all the talents in this province. As we've seen in one report after another, there isn't the capital in this province to grow the province like we know

that it needs to grow for the future of this province. We have to address that and we have to encourage investment from outside of this province.

And what better way to do that — number one, utilizing the capital that we have in the province through our First Nations, and allowing more private-public partnerships to bring in capital from outside the province, to invest in power projects in this province.

(15:00)

We have seen that there is . . . the federal government announced that there is going to be a pilot project built concerning cleaner coal-burning energy. And as we know, Mr. Speaker, the . . . Saskatchewan is highly dependant on burning coal to produce electricity. And certainly I believe that we should be in the forefront of trying to attract that pilot project to southern Saskatchewan in conjunction with the University of Regina, where I had a tour with my colleagues yesterday.

And that's one of the areas that all universities, in particular the U of R (University of Regina) and the U of S (University of Saskatchewan), are looking at to access those federal dollars. And I think a pilot project in Saskatchewan, that it's . . . would attract investment like we've seen with the synchrotron in Saskatoon. It brings the expertise; it keeps the expertise. We have expertise in this province; it would attract other potential investments into this province, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, this is something that the NDP government seems to not understand is to, in order to attract this investment we need to work hand in hand with the federal government, the public sector, and the private sector to encourage those developments, those projects in the province to . . . so that we have a broader tax base in this province, so we have more money in the end for health care and education and other infrastructure projects that should be the sole responsibility of the government.

And, Mr. Speaker, there's something that this government doesn't understand, that that should be the main responsibility is to look after the infrastructure, look after health care, and education, and should not be so concerned with taking taxpayer dollars and investing them around the world and losing money, because inherently government-run projects are not run well.

And we need a . . . and I believe it's a public-private partnership that we must look at to take the benefits of our Crown corporations that they do in their core businesses, which do a great job, and partner with private sector people that have the expertise and outside capital that we can access to develop these projects.

So there are many, many areas that this Bill speaks to, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly need to work towards fostering other types of energy development in this province. And I believe that any Bill that limits the private sector from coming into this province to do other projects such as coal burning, and as we've seen in the North with Weyerhaeuser burning some of their waste products to develop energy, and just small operations, small individual operations — windmills is the best example — we should be encouraging those types of developments and

certainly cogeneration with, in the oil industry and other types of businesses in the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, certainly we'll be asking third party groups exactly how they feel about this statement, and certainly ask them how this could impact on their cogeneration projects. And we'll wait to hear from those groups before we move this Bill along because I think it's very important that we get the thoughts of other people in this province concerning the direction that this Bill is going to take. So at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — Moved by the member for Biggar that debate on Bill No. 2 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion's carried.

Debate adjourned.

### Bill No. 7

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 7 — The Automobile Accident Insurance Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to add a few more comments to Bill No. 7, the automobile accident insurance amendment legislation that we have before us.

Mr. Speaker, the other day I was talking about and raised some comments regarding the no-fault insurance program we have in the province of Saskatchewan. And as we have seen in the past, Mr. Speaker, we have had many comments about the no-fault program. And in many cases the opposition has been painted as being totally opposed to the no-fault program. But I think, Mr. Speaker, if you would take the time to review . . . or any person in the public could take the time to review *Hansard*, they'd find that many opposition members have spoken out very positively about many aspects of the no-fault insurance program.

However, we all realize that there are certain aspects of the no-fault program that have impacted a number of Saskatchewan residents over the past number of years, and impacted them very significantly. To the point that there are individuals, as a result of the no-fault program prior to the bringing forward the option of the tort clause about a year ago, who have been basically sitting, Mr. Speaker, in a situation of limbo; and the fact that their issues, their cases, their concerns and the health needs, and their economic needs continue to be overlooked. And we would hope, Mr. Speaker, that what the minister was indicating in the changes coming forward in this piece of legislation, that many of these individuals and certainly individuals down the road will not have to face the challenges that about 5 per cent of the population have faced over the past number of years since the no-fault program was introduced.

Now the minister talked about the proposed changes ensuring that benefits would continue to be adequate and fair and we certainly agree with that. We have asked this government to take a look at the sections of the no-fault legislation where we have felt that fairness has not really been forthcoming; where the compensations have not really been adequate. And we have asked this government to look very carefully and to come forward with recommendations that would meet the needs of individuals who have . . . haven't been adequately covered under the no-fault program.

Now the minister indicated in . . . when he was talking about the adequacy of the program and the fairness, he mentioned that . . . talked about top-up benefits. And, Mr. Speaker, we're quite well aware of the fact that over the period of time individuals who have been injured in automobile accidents or accidents of other nature, have also as a result of the types of accidents have received compensation from other programs such as Workers' Compensation.

And in many cases we have found, Mr. Speaker, that the funding that is made available such as through the Workers' Compensation program haven't quite been at the same level that the no-fault program was . . . that the funding would have been available. So what the no-fault program has done has topped up to bring that individual's coverage to the level that no-fault would certainly have covered had they been strictly under the no-fault program.

And we certainly, Mr. Speaker, have agreed with that. But there was a point where single individuals were not covered and the minister indicated that single individuals would now be covered under the changes.

However, Mr. Speaker, one of the concerns we have raised as well is the whole appeal process. And the minister indicated in his second reading speech, he was talking about the appeal commission, talking about its independence, and the fact that its rulings are binding to SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) and the claimant.

And, Mr. Speaker, the minister mentioned that some of the claimants who pursue appeals through the appeal commission eventually lose interest in the process. And what this piece of legislation is doing, Mr. Speaker, is allowing the fact that if an appeal before the commission hasn't been pursued that, after six months if it doesn't continue to be pursued, it can be dismissed.

The question I have, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that many people actually lose interest, not that they haven't been dealt with fairly or not with the fact that the concerns have not been heard or adequately addressed. They just find that the frustration of appealing a decision . . . a ruling, going to the commission — and I would question sometimes whether or not the commission is independent and as removed from SGI as the minister would like us to believe or if the facts are — that when people go . . . They make an appeal to a commission that they believe is independent. We have questioned at times whether or not this commission is as independent as the government would claim it is to be. And certainly, that is a concern that has been brought to our attention by many individuals over the past number of years.

And our concern is if . . . The commission can say, well there's an appellant has raised a claim, however six months have passed since we've heard anything further. And, Mr. Speaker, this could be after a year of an ongoing process of raising the concerns and bringing the appeals forward and finally, out of frustration, the appellant just gives up. And as I said earlier, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't necessarily mean that the claimant had their concerns addressed. It's just the fact that the minister is saying, well if we haven't heard anything over a six month period, we're just going to dismiss that case. And this piece of legislation gives the opportunity for dismissal.

Well, Mr. Speaker, one would have to ask if, as the minister's indicated, after six months, if we haven't heard anything further from a claimant that we're just going to dismiss the case, would we basically find that the commission or SGI would just continue delaying the process until people finally give up in trying to hear their claimant heard and walk away and then say, well we haven't heard anything for six months, therefore this appeal has now been dismissed and cannot be further pursued?

And so, it's certainly a question that we want to raise with the minister because, Mr. Speaker, it's important that the people of Saskatchewan recognize and are aware of the fact that their insurance company is properly and adequately dealing with their concerns, ensuring that they are . . . receive adequate coverage should they find themselves having to deal with the health related circumstances due to an accident and the fact that if there are some questions arising from the way they've been dealt with, and they feel they haven't been dealt with fairly, that they have adequate access to the appeal process to follow up on those concerns to ensure, as the minister indicated in the earlier part of his speech, that fairness and the adequate financial coverage is made available to individuals.

Mr. Speaker, as well the minister indicated that there are two proposed amendments to no-fault injury coverage, one of them dealing with the fact that an insured individual with no-fault coverage, who is entitled to sue for non-economic loss, is not subject to a \$5,000 deductible.

Now one would have to ask, why was a 5,000 deductible put there in the first place? I would assume, Mr. Speaker, the \$5,000 deductible was put there . . . And one would say, well, for frivolous claims. I think that's fair. But at the same time, Mr. Speaker, very few people that I'm aware of would be going after an insurance company or SGI for something that's fairly frivolous. Most times when an issue is raised and the issue is followed through in the courts, it's for something of substantial nature.

And so one would have to ask, why would we have put a \$5,000 deductible in place? Is that just so SGI could say, well we don't have people suing us because there haven't been any lawsuits come forward. Well if you're going to have a deductible of this nature, it's going to actually intimidate people to the point that they may not pursue some economic benefit or coverage for insured coverage and loss — whether it's economic loss as a result of . . . as a result of a health injury, or due to an accident or whatever the circumstances. So we would have a number of questions we'd like to ask of the minister. But I think, Mr. Speaker, this certainly appears to be an adequate move on the part of this government in removing that \$5,000

deductible.

The minister also said some of the changes will clarify how SGI calculates an income replacement benefit under no-fault in cases where an insured suffers a relapse in their medical condition after the first 180 days. And, Mr. Speaker, I think this is appropriate as well because, Mr. Speaker, many times when you've been injured and whether an accident of some form or other . . . Especially as a younger person. Mr. Speaker, we all feel that we are quite capable, and physically capable, of bouncing back and getting back into the workplace, or being able to resume our activities.

And I would suggest to you, Mr. Speaker, that most people themselves, if they're involved in an accident will do whatever is necessary to get back to their place of work. Or in the case of a private business, that individual will do whatever it takes to get back to work so that he . . . because his business does . . . is not affected as a result of time loss because of his dealing with his physical problem as a result of a work-related accident, or an injury on the highways, or whatever the circumstances.

(15:15)

And, Mr. Speaker, we have seen — and individuals in the past have found — while they felt very good after a period of rehabilitation, felt that everything was under control, that their lives were back to normal, all of a sudden a relapse occurs. And, Mr. Speaker, what has happened as a result of this — if a relapse has occurred — there has been a failure to recognize that that relapse is related directly to the accident the person has just been recovering from. And as a result of the failure to recognize that, individuals have lost their ability to receive adequate and fair financial funding and recognition for their . . . the health needs that they face, the financial needs of those health costs, as well as the economic loss that they have faced.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is another . . . appears to be another correction to this piece of legislation that I would think would be appropriate and we would look . . . certainly want to look at addressing a number of questions with the minister in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that at this time I have raised some of the major concerns that I've had. I know a number of other individuals have also wanted to speak to this Bill, so I'll take my place and allow others to stand up in the Assembly and continue to address the issue. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to also speak to Bill No. 7, An Act to amend The Automobile Accident Insurance Act, Mr. Speaker.

There are numerous amendments to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, and we certainly will be sending this information out to various groups to get their feedback because this is a very important Bill that changes . . . that speaks to the changes of no-fault insurance, Mr. Speaker. And it's interesting to note that the minister's, in his second reading speech, that there had been proposed for no-fault is ensuring that someone who has no-fault is entitled to sue for non-economic losses and is subject to a

\$5,000 deductible.

And it's interesting that the government has allowed the tort insurance . . . And I spoke on a Bill yesterday to allow people . . . well basically the government set a cap for people to sue for non-economic losses. And now under the no-fault insurance, the government is also setting in process the ability to sue under no-fault for non-economic losses, which is interesting to see the government move in that direction.

Of course, also in this section, it deals with changes to the insurance coverage in terms of off-road accidents. And we have some questions concerning, does it cover . . . does it exclude farm-related or hunting-related accidents and rollovers and things like that. Also, you know, simple accidents that may involve hunting or going to the beach and things like that, Mr. Speaker.

And one thing that has come up in my constituency is . . . Actually just recently my son was driving down the highway very close to our home and hit a deer. And as it turned out, the vehicle has been written off. Which brings to mind a project, a proposal by a local RM (rural municipality) concerning deer.

As we know, the numbers of deer in the province has grown dramatically and there's various reasons why the number of wildlife have grown. And I think the government's policy on increasing the fees to the . . . hunting fees and things like that, have dramatically affected hunting, and there's just not as many people out there hunting wildlife as there used to be. So, in turn, that means there's more wildlife on our roads and highways.

And where I live, just 3 miles east of Biggar on highway . . . No. 14 Highway, there's a spot there that deer come across. Actually, I believe the deer cross the highway so they can come and eat my grain and my hay bales. But it's an area that's . . . has a lot of animals.

And further down Highway 14 from Perdue and on to Asquith again, there's a lot of trees and brush. And the people in that RM, their proposal, their pilot project which they want to set up, really speaks to wildlife. And what they want is to get some . . . to do a count of traffic, the number of hits along that part of the highway where vehicles hit wildlife. And we, we are unable. I don't believe SGI has kept statistics concerning the number of accidents along that stretch of the highway.

And what the RM wants to do is to, is to expand their mowers and update their mowers and tractors. And of course the RM cuts their own ditches. And what they want to do is set up a pilot project basically first, to get a count on the number of accidents caused by wildlife on the . . . on that stretch of the highway. But they also want be allowed to, on a pilot project basis, to cut the ditches along the highway more than is being now. Basically the highways . . . the ditches along Highway 14 are being cut once a year.

And as we know, the wildlife will come to the edge of the ditch to feed on any grain that's been spilt or salt actually that they pick up along the, along the highway. And in turn as the traffic come along, the wildlife will in many cases jump out in front of the traffic and be hit, which causes considerable expense to SGI and to the Auto Fund and a lot of cost to the individual, as well

as the huge possibility of death and injury to travellers along that stretch of the highway.

And the RM would like to do this pilot project, and I'm helping them with that project to see if there's a possibility of the Highways department or SGI — I would imagine it should be SGI — that would encourage this type of pilot project. Because if we did things to keep the wildlife away from the ditches, that would lessen the risk of animals running on and causing traffic accidents. So that's something that we'll continue to work at.

And I believe SGI needs to look at that type of pilot project because, quite frankly, the government, the NDP government has really cut . . . has allowed the dramatic increase in wildlife in this province along the roads and highways. And it's just not Highway 14, a secondary highway, but even the grid roads and smaller highways running north and south; this is certainly a huge, a huge problem where there's a lot of costs and expense to the SGI fund. And like I say, it certainly is a possibility of injury and death to travellers along those, those roads, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill, really we need to look at where the government is going. You know, the government brought in no-fault a number of years ago. And after a lot of concerns and . . . from people in this province, they finally brought in the option of a tort system. And now we see that under no-fault they're starting to move away from no-fault, which is allowing some lawsuits concerning non-economic losses, as we have seen that is allowed under tort.

So it just makes you wonder what the government is thinking, what direction the government is going. Concerning their thinking about SGI and the Auto Fund, we certainly want to keep in mind the impact of changes to the cost of insurance in this province.

Again the government has talked about keeping this basket of utility rates the lowest in Canada. But we certainly have to look at keeping insurance rates low in this province as well to make sure that it's one of the things in the province that will attract investment into the province. And insurance rates is certainly part of that package that businesses from outside the province look at when they are planning to come to the province to set up a business, or employees. It's one of the many things that are taken into account.

Another area, Mr. Speaker, that when we talk about no-fault is really the insane situation where — we've had in the past — where an individual really committed a criminal act, was tried and convicted of really ramming another person, doing serious damage to the individual's legs by ramming him against another vehicle, but when the no-fault kicked in, the no-fault insurance kicked in to cover the costs. And even though this individual has committed a criminal act, done bodily damage — really, really it was a physical assault — but one could conclude that it was an attempt to kill someone. And in those situations where no-fault continued to be the way that the insurance claim was handled, and so a person that was convicted of a physical assault fell under no-fault when it came to damages. And so it certainly is a odd way that no-fault works in some cases.

Now under this Bill it's opening it up to some, you know, some

which is entitled to sue for non-economic losses, which the government says is deductible up to \$5,000. So it's kind of a hazy area where we don't know exactly where the government's going and what their thinking is. Or is the government just making changes, just try to look after certain individual concerns without looking at the broad picture, Mr. Speaker?

And we certainly have to look at other areas that the Bill addresses. And as I had said initially, there's certainly many amendments that this Bill speaks to. And we certainly will have to take this Bill and talk to many interest groups and third parties so that this Bill is not really hurting the province in a way that will stop attracting businesses in the province.

Just one thing, it speaks to people . . . not giving insurance to people that are in an accident because of suicide, and it's going to be interesting how those types of things are determined, Mr. Speaker.

We hear second- and third-hand that there are vehicle accidents, that people do commit suicide by vehicles — but I just wonder how this is going to be determined when there's no witnesses that there's an accident. So many times people fall asleep on the highway and ram another vehicle and are killed. And unfortunately I suspect that maybe that is one situation where people have committed suicide by driving into another vehicle.

So we certainly don't want to bring in any situation that does not look after people's insurance needs — and people that are injured and the families of these individuals who have people that have died in automobile accidents — or have the breadwinner of the family injured and is unable to work in the future, Mr. Speaker.

And I certainly will — speaking to this pilot project that was brought forward to me — I certainly will be . . . like to talk to the minister about this particular project. And so at this time, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to adjourn debate, move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Biggar that debate on Bill No. 7 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.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

#### Subvote (AG01)

**The Chair:** — Order. Committee of Finance. The first item before the committee are the consideration of estimates for the Department of Agriculture.

I invite the minister to introduce his officials.

(15:30)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you very much. I would like to introduce my officials, and also make a few comments about Agriculture and Food, and then I'd be . . . look forward to questions from the opposition.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce Doug Matthies, sitting to my immediate left, and Doug is the deputy minister for Agriculture. Immediately behind Doug is Hal Cushon, who is the assistant deputy minister. Next to me, on my right, is Louise Greenberg, assistant deputy minister, and behind me, Maryellen Carlson, who is assistant deputy minister.

Back in the back row — there he is — Stan Benjamin, who is the general manager for the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation; and Greg Haase, in the row on this side, second in, is director of lands branch. And next to, I think I'll start on this end and just go across there, Ross Johnson, manager of operational services, corporate services branch. And then next to Ross is Greg Haase. And then Kari Harvey, manager of business services, agri-business development branch. And Rick Burton, director of policy branch. And next to Rick is Dave Boehm, director of financial programs branch. And then immediately behind Hal Cushon, is Karen Aulie, who is director of corporate services branch.

Mr. Chair, it is with great pleasure that I come before the committee for estimates and Committee of Finance doing estimates for Agriculture and Food. I'm sorry to say that my voice is probably not so good today. I've got a bit of a cold, but I'll try and speak loudly enough that I can be heard.

In terms of Agriculture and Food, I think a number of items that are key as we're working at building the agriculture industry and giving support to farm families in this time and in the time ahead. And that is that over these past few years we have faced some very trying times in the agriculture community. The droughts that we have faced, the diseases that we have faced, have certainly taken a toll on the agricultural economy. And that shows up somewhat in our having to pull back on some of the very exciting development work that we have been doing.

And it's our belief and our hope that in these areas where we have had to pull back, that it will only be for a short term. Because as I indicate, there are certainly have some very, very exciting developments that are happening in agriculture and in food and in rural revitalization; and we want to make sure that these continue because certainly agriculture is a key sector in the economy of Saskatchewan. And we're very excited to see some of the growth and development that has happened despite these very difficult times.

Mr. Chair, we have also, I think it's important to note, really done a . . . I think the former minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization and this team that he has worked with and our government has worked very hard to make sure that throughout these difficult times that we have had programs and funding available for programs that would help people through a time of crisis.

And it's very, very challenging for us when we're working with the federal government on 60/40-based programs to try and

meet those financial needs with a small, relatively small tax base. And I say relatively — it's relative to the large size of agriculture in this province. And we know that there are other provinces, Prince Edward Island being one, that are facing similar problems dealing with the 60/40 programs. So we are working to try and overcome some of those difficulties.

Hopefully, the federal government will see things the same way that we do; we will get kind of a more equitable support across the nation for agricultural producers; and hopefully that too will positively impact the agriculture industry in this province.

When I look to the future, of course we look forward hopefully to a better year this year. We're hoping that there will be consistent rains in the next few weeks that will put the moisture levels up. And we also look forward to building the industry with our intensive livestock operations. We hope to see more slaughter processing facilities in the province. And we also recognize that there is a significant place for many successful family farms in the province, and we want to continue to be able to encourage those developments as well.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, and with . . . or, Mr. Chair, and with consideration for all of the struggles that agriculture has faced in these past few years, I look forward to the questions from the members opposite.

**The Chair:** — Administration, (AG01). I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you, Mr. Minister, for introducing your officials, and I in turn welcome your officials to the Legislative Assembly this afternoon. We know that they'll be a great help and a great service to us in answering the questions that we'll be asking this afternoon. And I'm sure that the minister will appreciate their expertise as well.

And I hope the minister's voice holds out. We have an hour and a half nearly to cover here, and I'm sure that my colleagues and myself will take it as easy on the minister as possible.

For a start, I'd like to turn the questioning over to the member from Melville-Saltcoats.

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

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I want to also welcome the officials today, Mr. Minister. The area I want to check . . .

**The Chair:** — Order. Order. Order. Just to let the member know that in the committee of estimates, or Committee of Finance dealing with estimates, members are required to stand while speaking. It's not a standing committee. Thank you. I recognize the member for Melville-Saltcoats.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just getting comfortable.

Mr. Minister, the area I want to go into is the national water supply expansion program, and I believe we've had some conversations on this. There seems to be some discrepancies, though, Mr. Minister, between PFRA (Prairie Farm

Rehabilitation Administration) officials and your own explanation of where we are with the program. So I guess my first question is, and we've talked about this before, but have we signed on to this new program?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — At this point we have not received the agreement back from the federal government in order to sign that yet. And I think as I indicated to the member the other day, Mr. Chair, the PFRA, for whatever reason, the program . . . the actual program that they're engaged in is not changing. It is really a delineation of the shared responsibilities — the work that Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is doing, the work that Agriculture is doing, work that Sask Water is doing in terms of water development — but PFRA's work still remains the same. They are still responsible and I really, from all of our . . . looking at this, there is no rational understanding or explanation for why PFRA would be holding back on taking agreements and signing agreements.

They may have made a unilateral decision to hold that back, but I think as far as the federal government is concerned, this is no change of operation. It's just a change of the fact that we are now signing joint agreements between the federal government and the provinces and each province and each federal . . . each provincial and federal government agreement is unique. So really, as far as we are concerned, there is no rational reason why PFRA could not be moving ahead on these farm programs. It's just a unilateral federal decision to not be there for them at this point.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I guess the question that comes next . . . And I'm having a hard time with this one because I've talked to federal PFRA people today as late as 11 o'clock this morning, and their opinion is that Saskatchewan has not signed on to the program and that's why at this point we do not have a program. So I'm getting mixed messages here. But having said that, I'll take the minister's word for that.

Mr. Minister, I guess another question I have then . . . And we'd asked written questions to find out how much the province had put into this program in the past such as 2001-2002 and 2002 and so on, and the answer we got back was nil. The province put nothing into that program. Would the minister comment on this. We may have used the wrong name for the program or something like that. All we wanted to know is what the province had to put up each year into it.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — No, the province has not put anything into this program. The PFRA program is a federal program and once again we have not signed only because there is no agreement that has been delivered from the federal government at this point to sign. It's true; we haven't signed, but it's because they have not given us the documentation to sign. That's it.

In terms of provincial money into the PFRA program, we have not ever put funding into that program. We do have our own programs which deal with pipelines and some of the other pieces but the on-farm programs for dugouts, wells, etc. — those are PFRA, federal government funded programs, have been for decades, and that's how they remain at this point.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister then brings up the other . . . another question then, I guess. We have farmers — I have them in my constituency and I know a number of the members do on this side of the House — that are in need of digging a well, or possibly a dugout. I haven't had that come up yet, but we know how dry it is in a number of the areas out there. And the April 1 deadline has come and gone. So should we get an agreement — and hopefully very quickly because the need is certainly out there and I think the need is growing — but the problem farmers have out there is the April 1 deadline has come and gone. How are we going to deal with that, Mr. Minister?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Our authority is in place now to sign this agreement. We have asked for the agreement. And whatever the holdup there is we're not sure, but we will continue to press for an agreement because we recognize the need, we recognize the timeline there. And we certainly don't want our farmers to be disadvantaged. They are already because of that deadline, but we're prepared to move this just as quickly as we get the agreement and can sign it and move it forward.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. And I may have missed it right at the start of your remarks, but I was wondering, I know some of the farmers that have been asking me are in urgent need of this to happen very quickly. Is there a list that they can apply now and get on that list because as we know, Mr. Minister, you have to be pre-approved to qualify for a loan for the PFRA sharing of these projects. Is there a list in place now that they could get on?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Because — excuse me — because this is a federal program, I mean it would be our suggestion that they call PFRA, ask to get put on a list in an orderly manner. So I mean they'll do them first-come, first-served basically. But at this point, as far as we know, there is no list until the agreement is signed. Officially they're not taking any action. And that's all we have from them. But I certainly if . . . I would encourage our producers who are in need to phone them, pressure them, to — if they don't have a list, start a list, put my name on it, and let's move this along.

**Mr. Bjornerud:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I think that's all I have at this time, Mr. Minister. I'd like to pass questioning over to my colleague from Kindersley.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, and welcome to your officials this afternoon. My first question is of a very general nature; it has to do with animal husbandry. Could you outline which particular Act under provincial legislation limits liability for producers in the practice of raising livestock relative . . . after they've dispersed of their livestock?

(15:45)

The reason that this question is being asked is specifically with regard to the BSE situation that we saw last year. Possibly, the cow directly came from Saskatchewan and producers need to be clear about where their liability ends with regards to provincial legislation following the liquidation of an animal.



**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Because BSE is under federal jurisdiction, we do not have any provincial legislation with regard to liability. That will be under federal jurisdiction. It is their issue to deal with as BSE is federal jurisdiction.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. My question wasn't about BSE in particular. BSE was outlining just as an example of how liability could be affected in the practice of animal husbandry.

What I'm asking is where is the legislation in place, provincially, that protects producers with regards to raising livestock and it defines what their liabilities are relative to that?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — To the best of the information that we have, there is no legislation that deals with animal disease. Basically, you're dealing with the normal rules of commerce.

And in terms of liability, people might press the issue but there is no legislation dealing with that currently.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Perhaps the minister can then define for me how the Department of Agriculture and Rural Revitalization is able to classify which animals fall under the practice of livestock; be they hogs, cattle, what have you. How is that classification and demarcation determined and under which Act?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Each program defines livestock. Particularly if you've got particular livestock questions or issues, if you name those, then we can deal with the particular issues under each Act.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would appreciate if you could name for an Act in particular on beef cattle.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's really . . . without any kind of specific . . . because each program has its own definition, if you've got something specific that you're looking for, ask directly, and we will deal with that. If you're . . . I mean under The Animal Products Act you've got livestock that's defined. But each Act, each program will have its own definition. So if there's something in particular, just ask. We'll let you know.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. No, what's in particular is producers are often moving into different forms of animal husbandry, and it is important that they have an understanding from this government of what classifies them as being agricultural producers, whether they're moving into wild boar production; whether they're moving into pheasant production; whether it's hog production; whether it's cattle production. And I shouldn't think that this would be an overly difficult question for the Minister of Agriculture to answer. You said bring up an animal, so I did.

So in general, to turn this in another way hopefully to be helpful to the officials, what does the Department of Agriculture and Rural Revitalization use as a benchmark for classifying an animal as legitimate in the pursuit of agriculture and agricultural animal husbandry?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well, my officials advise me that you know you could basically raise, grow any kind of animal within

the province as long as you know the issues around endangered species or dangerous species. But if people are interested in developing a particular line they would generally seek some advice and guidance on that.

And I mean it's . . . we're relatively free here in terms of people's ability to develop their agricultural products. And we've seen a fair bit of diversity over the years and encourage that diversity. But in terms of — in terms of openness to what could be defined as livestock and agriculture product there's . . . it's pretty wide open at this point.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, I'm glad to hear that that is the direction that the department wishes to go. And I would ask the minister to qualify for me if that would include the raising of elk or deer or reindeer?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Our domestic game farm regulations allow for Cervidae to be raised as domestic animals on the farms. And there are people within the province who are practicing that, who are raising elk, deer, and we see these practices right now. And so if you have any further questions in that area, go ahead.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I know that elk and deer farmers would greatly like to see the ministry responsible for their . . . the welfare of their animals and whatnot.

However, as of recently they've been forced to sign releases, put forward the Saskatchewan Cervidae chronic wasting disease surveillance and certification program, and there's a registration form from Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food. And from this it basically puts the liability for production completely onto the producer regardless of, you know, what happens to the animal. And this seems to be a very negative aspect to the industry.

So specifically what could happen is, if an individual animal left a producer's yard, maybe he sold it as a breeding animal to another producer . . . and in theory this . . . perhaps this animal could go even through five or six producers. And at that point the animal had somehow . . . develops chronic wasting disease. Every producer that has had effect with this animal could be liable. Hence the whole industry, with its interrelatedness to one another, could be liable at any point relative to these government regulations.

Would the minister be kind enough to explain these forms and the logic — or lack thereof — behind them?

**The Chair** — Why is the member on his feet?

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — To request leave to introduce guests.

**The Chair** — The minister has requested leave to introduce guests. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

Leave granted.

**The Chair** — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

## INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I'm very pleased today to introduce in the west gallery a group of young people who have come to meet with some members of the cabinet to discuss how we move Saskatchewan forward in a more youth-friendly way.

I'm particularly pleased to introduce Victoria Morris, Lee Reaney, Wade Luzny, and Danylo Puderak. These individuals are with a group called the Youth Action Now. This is . . . they're putting together a very exciting program for the province's centennial that will focus in on how we make Saskatchewan more youth-friendly and take a look at some of the great opportunities here. They've got some great ideas, they're full of energy, and I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming them here.

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

**The Chair:** — I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

#### Subvote (AG01)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Mr. Chair, there is a national certification for cervids and this is handled by the CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency), and we are administrators of the program here in the province. The forms are federal forms. And for diseases of the . . . like CWD (chronic wasting disease), these are federally reportable diseases, and if need for inspectors to be involved, the inspectors are also federal inspectors. So if there are issues with the forms, they are federal forms and you can follow through on that front.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. The question I would have to the minister is: what lobbying has the minister done to the federal government with regards to the closure of the Korean border to elk velvet . . . antler velvet? As the minister I'm sure is aware, since that border was closed because of changes to the CWD monitoring, that market has in essence collapsed and the New Zealanders have picked it up.

The New Zealanders have a huge herd of elk and reindeer and their total CWD testing consists of 20 heads a year. It's absolutely not relevant, but for political purposes it has more or less destroyed our industry.

So could the minister be kind enough to table any correspondence he would have had with the Minister of Foreign Affairs with regards to lobbying for the opening of the Korean border relative to the velvet market in Korea.

(16:00)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I thank the member for the question because this is a very important . . . elk in Canada, certainly in this market, key is the elk velvet. There are other, other places

that are raising elk — I believe New Zealand — where meat is the key resource. But here it is elk velvet. And with CWD reported the borders to Korea did close and that had a major negative impact on the elk market.

The previous minister of Agriculture wrote to the federal minister and urged some action there. I've also addressed this issue with elk breeders and we have been pressing for more open borders and doing that on all fronts really with all the diseases, to try and make sure that there are science-based rules that are applied.

And we now with the new federal minister, and I think even more importantly with the new federal deputy minister, Mr. Leonard Edwards, who has significant experience in the Orient and particularly Japan, Korea markets, with issues around foreign trade we do have some hope that with his understanding and his connections that we will hopefully see some further action there and the borders be opened.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — I thank the minister for that answer and I would appreciate if the minister would be able to table that correspondence that the previous minister put forth.

My next question returns again to the forms put forth. And I have to ask the minister, in the agreement to distribute these forms on behalf of the federal government, did you have any say into the indemnification and release? Because under section 1 here, and I quote:

The operator agrees to assume all risks and responsibility for and in connection with the program, any aspect of the program or its implementation.

And I'll end the quote there. That's from the first paragraph under release.

It just seems to me, Mr. Minister, that this is an exceedingly harsh position for our government to be distributing to producers. And could you please comment on that, why this was allowed into the forms and what's going to be done about it for the future?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The answer to your first question is no, we did not have input. There were certainly protests and concerns raised by department officials with the federal government, with the CFIA, but to no avail. It's their program. They're operating it the way that they want.

Now in support of the elk producers here, what the department is responsible for is for the testing of elk heads because we want to be able to provide CWD-free proof and hence be able to help this market to move again.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, I'm somewhat bewildered why we would participate with the federal government when there was a North American recognized surveillance program for CWD presented by . . . (inaudible) . . . recognized by Americans, why we would sign onto the federal government program so easily without any input into the forms. This is devastating to the industry or has the potential thereby to be. Why would we be in a position that we would be participating in it?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There is no North American recognized program for CWD. The USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) is working at developing approved programs, but at this point do not have that fully in place. And because we want to see this industry move forward, we would help. But certainly at this point there is no North American program that we could tap into.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, it's true that there is no program recognized by the various levels of government across North America. However industry wide there have been voluntary programs for a number of years, these being of the highest standards in North America, recognized by the industry and by academia. But we'll leave that aside, Mr. Speaker.

The more important question is, why would your department administer such forms when you didn't have an input into what they said, and as from the last quote that I read, these forms are particularly damaging and have the potential to devastate this industry? Why would this Department of Agriculture in Saskatchewan participate in this?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well I'll say one more time, Mr. Chair, that in terms of our involvement with the program, there are a couple of facets of that. One of them is that it is a federal government program that is designed to deal with the disease issue.

And if it is not a government program — the member referred to producer programs — but if it is not a government program, the problem is that foreign buyers are not interested. They want the certification of a broad government program before they're interested in buying.

And the reason why we participate, even though CFIA has not given us leave to change any of the program at all, the reason why we participate is because we want this industry to move ahead. And we have staff in place and we can help through the administration of this program.

But I mean, in terms of our motivation for helping, even though we don't have control, we want the industry to move ahead, and we can offer this help that will enable that to happen.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I would counsel the minister that I, as a producer, if I ever had to sign contracts that says the operator agrees to assume all risks and responsibility for and in connection with the program, any aspect of the program or its implementation, relative to what's produced on my farm, any legal counsel would tell me that that is not a wise thing to do.

There is no way, Mr. Minister, that this form can at all be expected to be positive for this industry. And having simply read the form, Mr. Minister, I'm sure that you or your predecessor would have had to have been aware of that. This does nothing to . . . This is simply an attack on the producer. It doesn't get beyond that, Mr. Minister.

And I'd like to switch my questioning now to some questions around the egg marketing board. And with regards to that, Mr. Minister, I am particularly interested in how quota is being

distributed in Saskatchewan and who is capable of receiving new quota for egg production?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Excuse me, Mr. Chair, I need some clarity. Are you speaking about table eggs?

**An Hon. Member:** — Yes.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Okay, Thank you.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, yes, Mr. Minister, from under the . . . We're talking about eggs for consumption, not for a hatchery.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The quota for table eggs is allocated under basically what is the old system, where a certain amount is allocated to existing producers and a certain amount to new producers. And that is done basically through the . . .

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Could the minister please inform the committee when the last time new quota was allocated to a producer?

**An Hon. Member:** — To a new producer.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — To a new producer. Thank you.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The officials inform me that it hasn't been for some significant time. They can look back on the records to find out. But the table egg industry is not growing in the province at this point, so there has not been new allocation of quota for some significant time.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I believe that it's been 32 years since any new producer was granted quota. But perhaps the minister could answer for me, have any existing producers been increasing their quota during the last 32 years?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The officials informed me that they will check to see when the actual last new quota was introduced. Really the direction that we're going is, we want to see this industry grow. We want to see more quota come, and it is our intention to move to an auction system for quota similar to what we have in the chicken industry.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. My question was not about . . . My last question was not about when we had a . . . when the last issuance for quota to a new producer was. The question is simply: since that has occurred, have existing producers expanded their quota? And I think that that shouldn't be a difficult question for the department to answer.

(16:15)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It's my understanding that the changes within the industry are primarily with the sale of barns and facilities, and that's what's led to any changes that have happened since the period when new quota was brought in.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So what I'm given to understand then is there has been increase in quota for existing producers. Is that correct?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — For real details, you may want to go to the egg marketing board, but as we understand it the quota has not changed over a significant period of years. There have been consolidations within the industry but no new quota added.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Unfortunately, the board which you spoke of I believe obtains its jurisdiction directly from legislation in this House — the Egg Producers' Board. And I would ask the minister directly — the egg marketing board, rather — does the minister have access to the egg marketing board's minutes on an annual basis?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There is no legislation that requires the boards to release their minutes. At this point it's their determination whether or not they want to release them.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. Could the minister explain to me how The Agri-Food Act is the piece of legislation which empowers the egg marketing board? Yet where's the accountability in that? Who does the board report to, who are they accountable to, if they're put directly in legislation — because I would hope that it would be to this Assembly through this minister.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think it's very important for the member to know that we do not try and micromanage these boards — that really this is an elected board — and we do expect the board to be accountable to those producers who elect them. And they are overall responsible to the agri-food equity Act. If there are members who believe that their board is not acting appropriately under that Act, then there is an appeal mechanism for them.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Minister, I didn't ask for the minister to be micromanaging the board. I asked for the piece of legislation to be accountable to this House. And can this minister tell me what steps he will take for next year or for the coming year to have those minutes present so that individuals can review them, because I have a letter here, Mr. Minister — it's from March 19, signed by yourself — which says they don't have to report. And the people of Saskatchewan and the constituents of Kindersley don't think that that question and answer is sufficiently met at this time.

So what will the minister be doing to have the Saskatchewan egg marketers report to . . . who will they be accounting to, and when in this Chamber, as it is the legislature . . . legislation from this Chamber which gives them their mandate.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — There are a couple of forum. First of all, they do annual reports with the major decisions in them. And secondly, they have annual general meetings where members can question the board. But in terms of provision of the minutes, no, and there's reasons for that, very good reasons . . . is that there are a lot of sensitivities in terms of the industry in terms of pricing. And if the member doesn't like that, well he's going to have to work his way through the system and find out if there's a way that he can get those minutes. But it's not coming here.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you for that answer, Mr. Minister. I would ask the minister how pricing can be affected in a supply management situation where 4 per cent of the national egg

market is designated to Saskatchewan. So perhaps the minister would be kind enough to elaborate on his answer that prices and whatnot can be . . . are sensitive material and shouldn't answer to this legislature even though the legislation is something which is . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . that gives them their mandate.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The issue about sensitivity in pricing is not around the formula set by the national program. It really is around the sellers into the wholesale market, and we are not privy to all of that detailed information that is there with the egg marketing board.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. With regards to the Saskatchewan egg marketing board who seems to be in control of this quota, a quota that is supposed to be a public trust yet no new producer has been allocated quota for over 32 years? Only — and the minister has said that they're accountable at their annual meeting — only quota holders are able to participate in such meeting. So unregulated poultry producers and/or egg producers have no say. And unfortunately this Act, The Agri-Food Act which empowers the egg marketing board, is accountable to this legislature, which represents hopefully the public trust and all producers.

So, Mr. Minister, I'll ask you again: who is the Saskatchewan egg marketing board accountable to? Is it to themselves, or is to this Legislative Assembly?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well as I suspect the member opposite knows, this is a supply managed industry; it is not a free market industry. In a supply managed industry, there has to be assurance that those who are into the domestic production will have a livelihood. That's why it is a supply managed industry. And therefore the information is held within the industry itself.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Is the minister then saying that because it's a supply management industry, it doesn't have to report to this Legislative Assembly? It's not accountable?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It does report to this Assembly, Mr. Chair, and we do get those annual reports from them. Thank you.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you. Will the minister please advise this House and this committee whether in the future he will be asking for the board minutes relative to new producers coming on? If that's been handed over to them, where is the evidence that this quota has not been usurped by a small group under the Saskatchewan egg marketing group and held as a public trust, but outside of the public's control?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well as I've indicated, this currently is in a situation where there has not been a new quota allocated. We will undertake to get the date when the last new quota was allocated. But I also indicated to the members opposite that we are in process of working towards a system where there will be an auction of new quota and where we will be pressing for new quota, and that's what we're looking forward to in the future.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Minister, quota and supply management — could you please from the . . .

especially from the philosophical background that members on the opposite side come from, how do we make the move from quota — which is supposed to be a public trust, which is supposed to be allocated relative to percentage of population in the country — to suddenly that this is going to go to a market aspect, which really excludes new producers? Could you explain the philosophical shift and how this is going to allow for new producers to enter?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — We do have some experience in this movement with the chicken industry, which remains supply managed. The quota is given through the supply-managed system, and it is auctioned in blocks so that a producer can be viable. And I think also in past experience, there has been a sensitivity to those who have been looking for applying for quota, and that would be the case in terms of new developments in the egg marketing as well.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Well that's very interesting that the minister should answer in that way, since his officials were unable to come up with when new quota for new producers had been allocated, which seems somewhat contradictory.

Mr. Chair, I found these answers by and large unsatisfactory. And I'm sorry my line of questioning will have to now be finished, but I know that the member from Carrot River Valley will have some questions. Thank you.

(16:30)

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the member from Carrot River Valley.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Two quick questions for the minister and the department, if I could. And before I ask the first one I want to preface it by saying that it's sort of partly related to the chicken industry, and my colleague from Kindersley was asking questions about the egg industry. I'm not sure which question should have come first, the chicken or the eggs.

However with the recent outbreak of avian flu in British Columbia and the depopulation of some 19 million birds and with the recent . . . within the last certainly 12 months the cases of BSE that have come out of Western Canada, my question for the department is, what contingency plans do we have in place here in Saskatchewan pending something we hope never happens of course, but pending the outbreak of avian flu or another case perhaps of BSE within the province? It is important that we have those contingency plans in place, Mr. Minister, and I would ask what those might be and what costs would be attached to them.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well at the current time, I mean recognizing that there is avian flu in North America, there have been actions taken by the producers themselves to try and make their farms as secure as possible. And we have also been encouraging best practices around bio-security and as well as that the department has been working on contingency programs. If we did have an outbreak here, it comes then under the CFIA and they have their plans they bring in place.

Currently, also we have sent someone to British Columbia also

to look at what is happening with regard to disposal and trying to get the best sense of how we organize in case there ever is an outbreak here. But right now it's just in terms of best practices for the producers.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Well thank you, Minister. That's a good answer. I appreciate the answer.

Just a supplementary on that same subject before I move on then. Is the department aware of any CFIA people or practices within Saskatchewan . . . Are we testing at this point in time for avian flu within the province?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I think it is important to know that not just in the area of birds but other areas of animal commerce, that we do test dead animals, sick animals, and we test with the birds for avian flu and other diseases as well if they are showing sickness.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you. On another issue, and not at all related to the livestock industry. A number of years ago, in the fall of 2002, a great deal of crop was left out in the fields, certainly in northeast Saskatchewan, in the Carrot River Valley and area. An issue that's come to my attention over the last number of months and in fact very recently is the fact that the Crop Insurance Corporation administered the Wildlife Fund that deals with the crop that was damaged from wildlife, as it lay out throughout the winter of 2002-2003.

I am very aware of many, many numbers — hundreds in fact — of producers throughout that area . . . in fact the member from Kelvington-Wadena is certainly very well aware of that, Canora-Pelly as well. It was a big area that was affected where many producers did not receive any compensation for wildlife damage when the crop was in fact harvested the next spring. It was condemned in many cases and unfit for consumption of any kind.

Some producers were compensated through this Wildlife Fund; some were not compensated. A great deal weren't. Some were told that they would have their compensation taken back if they complained.

Again this fund was administered through the corporation. It wasn't a provincial program, it was a federal program. Some producers were told by crop insurance authorities that there was no money left in the fund. And yet when we have talked to authorities from the federal government, they said there was adequate and still is adequate money for that program.

And my question then is a big one. Why have these claims not been paid and why is there provision within this . . . with these estimates, this budget, to take control and to pay these claims — legitimate claims — out? This is an issue that's ongoing and it's huge. And I think that we as the provincial government ought to get some closure on this issue.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Well there are a number of elements to the question, and I'll try and address each of those as they come forward. In terms of over-winter loss, unless people had crop insurance there is no payment for winter loss, for over-winter loss. For waterfowl damage and loss there is value; the value at the time of harvest is what is paid. And for those people, all

legitimate claims have been paid out. But for those people with crop insurance which also covered losses there, they've generally been satisfied. For those without crop insurance, there've been some concerns that they felt like they didn't get as full a coverage as they would have liked.

**Mr. Kerpan:** — I would just . . . just in closing my portion of this question and answer period, I'd just like to invite the minister and his department to come to northeastern Saskatchewan, to come to the Carrot River Valley and Kelvington-Wadena and meet with producers who really have felt that they have not been fairly dealt with. Some include those that were in crop insurance and some others. I could easily say here today that we could put together hundreds of producers who would like to talk to the department about this issue, and would be very happy to do that if I could get a commitment from the minister that he and his officials would come there.

Mr. Chairman, at this point in time though I am going to hand off this question and answer to the member from Kelvington-Wadena. And I would like to thank this House, this committee for this time.

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the member from Kelvington-Wadena.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. Welcome to the minister and to the officials. Mr. Minister, I guess I would like to finish the questioning that the member from Carrot River Valley had started about this issue, because there are many of my constituents that are also dealing with the issue. I've had phone calls in the last while asking what we can do and I'm wondering if the minister will commit to meeting with these producers. They are really concerned that the big game damage was . . . Of course it's out of their control and there's many of them feel that there was some wrongdoings.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — It is our understanding that those who had crop insurance and were covered for the over-winter loss, that in terms of any appeals or appeals mechanism . . . been very, very, very few of those. And that most of the concerns are for those who did not have coverage by crop insurance and did not feel that there was adequate in the big game and waterfowl which does not cover the over-winter loss. It's just a basic coverage for the value at harvest time.

And at this point we don't really have any plan to expand the programs. And we would just encourage people, if they're concerned about the losses, to purchase crop insurance and then they'll be covered for the over-winter loss as well, and basically get better coverage than what they could just leaving it for the big game and waterfowl.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I will be taking your words back to the people that are concerned about this issue. I'm sure that you are aware that within the same area there would be some farmers in the very same situation. Some of them received coverage. Some of them didn't receive coverage. Their land is connected and they seem to be a difference of opinion on why there was damage claims required. And I think it's something that has to be looked into further. So the next time we have an opportunity to speak, I'll be bringing further

issues up.

Mr. Minister, I want to talk to you about an issue that took place in the budget, and that is the minimum gasoline purchase of 200 litres at card locks. And I'm wondering . . . we have concerns expressed to us by a number of places. This one is the co-op in Kelvington.

And one of their concerns is the cost that will be incurred to create the systems and programs to account for and handle the purchases. Can the minister tell me, has there been any decision made on whether they'll still be eligible at the end of the year to add up purchases that were made at less than 200 litres, so at the end of the year farmers can apply for the rebate?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — In terms of your comments on the earlier question, what I would encourage the member to do is to have those people who — and both members actually, the member from Carrot River as well — if there are people who feel that they were not adequately dealt with, if they could write to the Department of Agriculture we will undertake to look at those claims and see if there is further work that can be done on them.

Now secondly you were asking about the fuel, and that would be better asked of the Department of Finance who administers and makes those decisions.

**Ms. Draude:** — So none of the questions that people have on the fuel tax can be asked at this time. Then my question, Mr. Minister, will be on the Crown . . . the lease lands. We have a number of people that are concerned because they haven't had the opportunity, first of all, for changing the leases over and also for grandfathering.

I have a constituent who has bought some land and the person they have purchased land from also has lease land and there's no opportunity for them to transfer this . . . leases from these people who have the leases to the new owner of the other land. What is your department doing?

I am very well aware that the Premier and some of his officials have met with individuals who are saying that this is a concern that has to be addressed; it's not just one individual case. And what is your department working on to deal with this issue?

(16:45)

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — That's under the 200 per cent size restriction. If a person has over 200 per cent of the lands, available lands within a municipality, there are restrictions then. And that is under active consideration within the department at this time.

**Ms. Draude:** — Mr. Minister, thank you. And so to give my constituent some sense of, of hope, when you're saying it's being actively looked at, what are you saying? Like, how long before you're going to make your decision? When these rules were put into place tens of years ago and the farm sizes were considerably different, and with farming changes the way they are nowadays, we're going to have to make some changes to allow the larger farms to operate.

These people are very concerned that their operations aren't going to be viable, and I think that if the Minister of Agriculture is really aware of what's happening in rural Saskatchewan it's . . . we're going to have to move quickly on this issue. Is there something that I can tell my constituent? It'll be dealt with in this session? Over the summer? What is your time frame?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — The best I can tell you at this point is I do expect it to come forward shortly. There is some information being put forward to us to examine, so I expect it will come forward fairly shortly.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I'll have to . . . I'll take your exact words back to my constituent, and I'm sure he's going to be very pleased with the idea of the word shortly. So I'm . . . I would expect probably then by the end of the month you'll be talking to him, because in my time frame that's quite short.

So, Mr. Minister, I'd like to defer questions over to the member from Saskatoon Silver Springs.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thanks very much, Mr. Chair. A few specific questions to the minister. As Agriculture minister in the midst of BSE and the avian flu, what value do you see in the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization at the U of S? And would you say that . . . would it be fair to say that this organization is a priority for your department?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Just basically we believe that the work that VIDO (Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization) has been doing has been excellent work, and we expect to see further developments. Right now there are a number of discussions underway about the type of funding, whether there's core funding or grant funding. And we have continued to provide quite significant support to VIDO over the years, and we anticipate that they will continue to do good work and be funded for that work.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well further to that, your department did provide \$300,000 a year for a number of years in addition to about \$500,000 a year that was provided from the Industry and Resources department. That funding started about ten years ago, and that agreement was a five-year agreement. So for the last five years, Mr. Babiuk from VIDO has said that he's living a hand-to-mouth existence, spending half his time looking for different pots of money to find for their operating needs.

I guess my question to the minister is that the best way for a world-class researcher to be spending his time?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Now just as I indicated, we're certainly looking at . . . I mean we recognize again the value of VIDO, and we're looking at how we can best provide the funding for this. Discussion is ongoing. And I think if you have some further specific questions, when it comes to Department of Learning, that would be the appropriate time to ask this.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well I guess that was one of my further

questions was, what would be the best department to look at? In talking to various VIDO officials, they said that they've had officials from three different departments visiting their facility from Agriculture, from Industry and Resources, and from Learning. I certainly intend to bring this up in the Department of Learning estimates.

But I guess, just a couple of more questions maybe you can shed some light on.

VIDO has been successful in obtaining funding through the Canadian Foundation for Innovation for the Level 3 INTERVAC (International Vaccine Centre) facility. As you know, this is a heavily competed for federal fund and it is quite an accomplishment for them to be able to receive that money. Are any negotiations underway between your department or the Department of Learning and Industry and Resources with the federal government, with Western Economic Diversification or Industry Canada to come up with the eleven and a half million dollars for operating that VIDO is looking for?

I believe they're asking the province for \$3.5 million per year, which I think is a reasonable amount. But I would, you know, ask the minister, as the Minister of Agriculture, to maybe take the leadership role from the provincial side and come up with the \$3.5 million. I don't think VIDO really worries about where it comes from but, if some assurance could be given to them that \$3.5 million would be coming from the province, I think that would allow Mr. Babiuk to sleep a little better at night.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — I would like to reaffirm again that our government recognizes how valuable VIDO is and how important it is to make sure that there is funding. The three departments are working together and working together with the federal government to try and make sure that it is adequately funded in this year and future years.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Well I will be, as I say, bringing it up with the Department of Learning as well.

But in talking to officials from VIDO, I understand that they're in the final rounds of competition for money from the Bill Gates foundation which, you know, says something for their international prominence.

And I understand that Mr. Babiuk and other officials have just returned from a BSE international conference where they and the Canadian cattlemen were the only two organizations that were asked to provide a presentation from Canada.

So you know, members on this side of the House are very concerned about this organization, especially in light of other things, like the microgravity drop tower that seemed to fall through the cracks; pardon the pun. But it just . . . It didn't come to fruition.

Promises have been made and as you can appreciate, from VIDO's point of view, dealing with three different provincial government departments and several federal government departments can be very frustrating. But I hope the minister is able again to make a commitment that he will steer this thing through the provincial government levels.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Once again I would just like to say how important we see VIDO not just as stand-alone. I mean, it is a national centre. But we look at the whole development that there is going on at the U of S, and we'll look at elements from the synchrotron to VIDO to ag-bio incorporated, and all of those developments which I think look forward to really a prosperous future and to a tremendous expansion of knowledge and understanding.

And with that being a national centre, it is our expectation that the federal government is going to provide significant funding. But I want to also reaffirm that recognizing the value, our government will also be — and the university — will be carrying their share, and as I indicated earlier, that the Department of Learning is lead in terms of the funding for this operation.

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister, for the serious way that you've answered the questions. We appreciate that. I guess the only other direction we would like to offer is that, you know, the government looks at maybe setting aside a certain amount of money per year to match the Canadian Foundation for Innovation awards that are granted to Saskatchewan researchers. I know other provinces do that and it makes it easier for the companies to do that.

But I'll finish my line of questioning now and take it up with the Department of Learning. And I'd like to introduce the member from Carrot River Valley for further questioning.

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

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I see by the clock we have just a very few short minutes left, and I'm glad to get the opportunity just to get back up once more.

I have an issue in my constituency, and I'm assuming that probably other MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) may have run into the same issue. An outfitter on the shores of Tobin Lake made request to make some changes and amendments to his business. He got approval from SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management), got approval from SaskPower, but did not get approval from Sask. Ag and Food.

My question to the minister and to the department is why in the world would Sask. Ag and Food have an interest in lakeshore first of all; and secondly, why would they want to be involved in it and how did that happen? And I guess lastly, would the department be prepared to get removed their responsibility on lakeshore property?

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Just in terms of the question of why land under water in southern Saskatchewan is our responsibility and we are also administering that particular area around Tobin on behalf of SaskPower . . . But I would ask the member and I recognize we're pretty much at the end of our time, so we'll close with this answer and with an invitation. And that would be an invitation to either ask your constituent or yourself to send the details to the department. My staff has indicated that they will look at the details and respond accordingly.

So I thank you and thank members for their questions and their

time today and I also want to thank my officials for their time and sharing of their expertise and knowledge. Thank you.

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Chair, I move that we rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Chair:** — The Government House Leader has moved that the committee rise, report progress, and ask for leave to sit again.

Is this agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Chair:** — That is carried.

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Chair of committees.

**Mr. Addley:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

**The Speaker:** — And when shall the committee sit again? I recognize the Government House Leader.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — 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 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 17:00.





## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING PETITIONS

Draude .....	893
Stewart .....	893
Eagles .....	893
Huyghebaert .....	893
Brkich .....	893
Weekes .....	893
Dearborn .....	893

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk .....	894
--------------------	-----

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Weekes .....	894
Kirsch .....	894

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall .....	894
Prebble .....	894
Gantefoer .....	894
Lautermilch .....	894
Hagel .....	895
Sonntag .....	895
Thomson .....	916

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

##### Minds Eye Pictures Wins Genie Awards

Morgan .....	895
--------------	-----

##### North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

Yates .....	895
-------------	-----

##### Vaccine and Infectious Diseases Organization

Cheveldayoff .....	895
--------------------	-----

##### Prince Albert YWCA Women of Distinction Awards

Borgerson .....	896
-----------------	-----

##### Mental Health Week in Canada

Dearborn .....	896
----------------	-----

##### International Youth Week

Morin .....	896
-------------	-----

##### Watrous Girls Win High Honours

Brkich .....	897
--------------	-----

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

##### Softwood Lumber Tariffs

Wall .....	897
Calvert .....	897

##### Complaint Regarding Treatment of Patient

Gantefoer .....	898
Nilson .....	898

##### Amalgamating School Divisions

McMorris .....	899
Thomson .....	900

##### Public Sector Investment in High-Risk Projects

Elhard .....	901
Serby .....	901

#### INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

##### Bill No. 43 — The Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act

Quennell .....	902
----------------	-----

##### Bill No. 44 — The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004

Taylor .....	902
--------------	-----

##### Bill No. 45 — The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004

Taylor .....	903
--------------	-----

##### Bill No. 46 — The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004

Taylor .....	903
--------------	-----

##### Bill No. 47 — The Pension Benefits Amendment Act, 2004

Quennell .....	903
----------------	-----

##### Bill No. 48 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004

Sonntag .....	903
---------------	-----

**STATEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

**Remarks Out of Order**

**The Speaker**.....904

**ORDERS OF THE DAY**

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS**

**Yates**.....904

**The Speaker**.....904

**GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

**ADJOURNED DEBATES**

**SECOND READINGS**

**Bill No. 1 — The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004**

**Krawetz**.....904

**Bill No. 2 — The Power Corporation Amendment Act, 2004**

**Weekes**.....907

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

**Toth**.....909

**Weekes**.....911

**COMMITTEE OF FINANCE**

**General Revenue Fund — Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization — Vote 1**

**Wartman**.....913

**Stewart**.....913

**Bjornerud**.....913

**Dearborn**.....914

**Kerpan**.....919

**Draude**.....920

**Cheveldayoff**.....921

## **CABINET MINISTERS**

Hon. L. Calvert  
Premier

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

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