



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

---

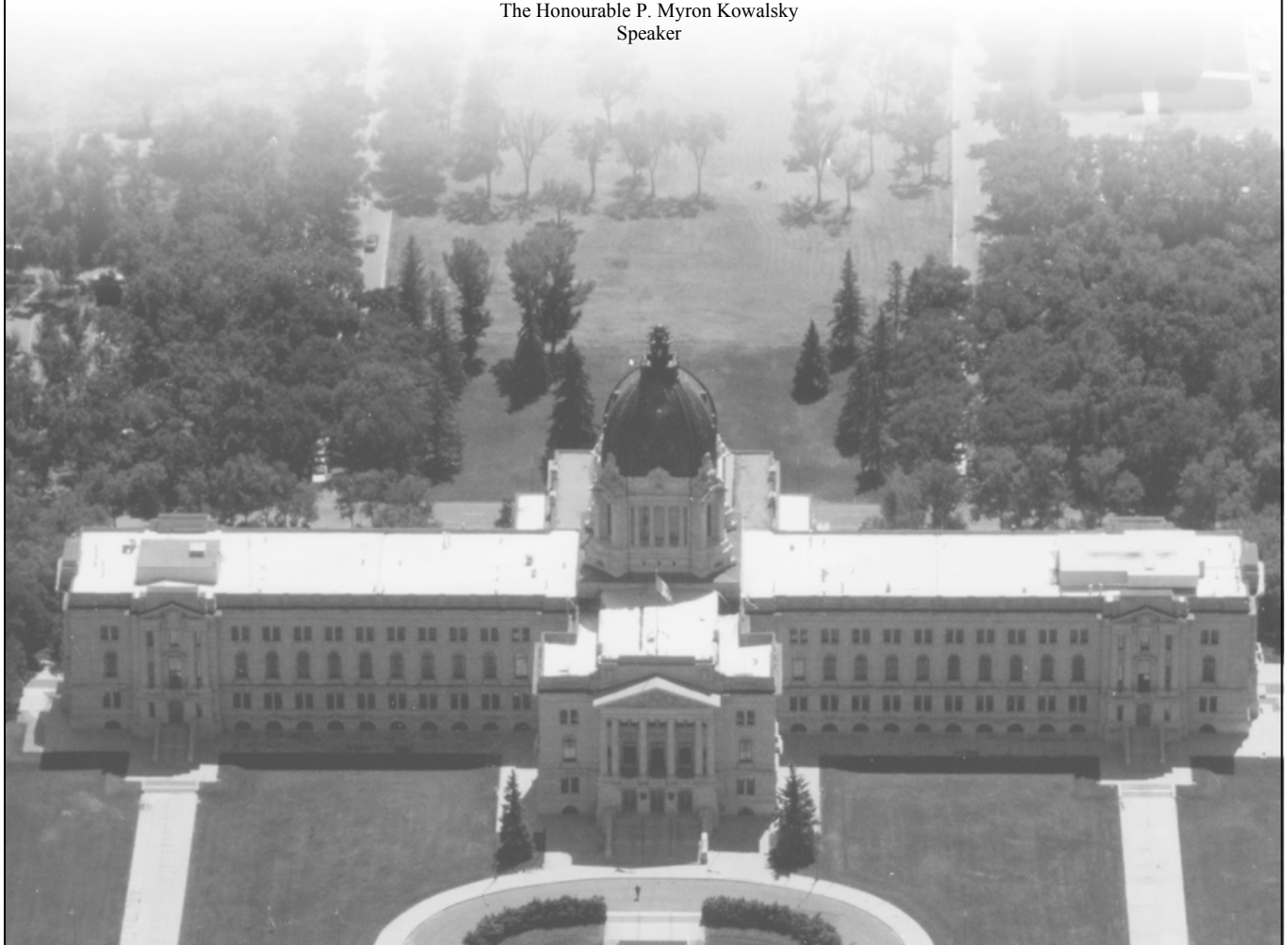
**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

---

(HANSARD)

Published under the  
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky  
Speaker



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

<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 Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I present a petition on behalf of constituents concerned with crop insurance premium increases and the reduction in coverage that attends this year's contract. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by constituents from the communities of Sceptre and Gull Lake.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of citizens concerned about the future of the Porcupine Carragana Hospital. The prayer of their 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 the Porcupine Carragana Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, all of the petitioners today are from the community of Porcupine Plain.

I so present.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to rise on behalf of people who are concerned about the future of the Foam Lake Health Centre:

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Foam Lake, Margo, Rose Valley, and Wadena.

I so present.

**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 Craik Health Centre. 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 Craik Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Eyebrow, Craik, Davidson, and Holdfast.

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 possible closure and downsizing of the 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 action 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 residents of Midale, Macoun, and Regina.

I so present. Thank you.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the possible closure of health care facilities in our constituency. 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 facilities providing health care services in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy are not closed or further downsized.

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

And this petition is signed by residents of Halbrite and Weyburn.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from residents in my constituency who are extremely concerned about the NDP's (New Democratic Party) plan to reduce long-term care beds and/or close hospitals. 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 the good citizens of Lafleche and Woodrow.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, sorry. I have a petition here calling on the government to repair and resurface Highway 15.

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

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

Signed by citizens from Davidson and Elbow.

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 Biggar. The petition reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps and ensure that the Biggar Hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance services are maintained at the very least their current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition today, and it's signed by residents of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the state of health care and the prayer reads as

follows:

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

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

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

I so present.

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A new petition concerning the Craik and District Health Centre;

Another new petition concerning the Dodsland-Luseland ambulance services;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 48, 72, 106, 145, 160, and 161.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Brkich:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 38 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: when will the town of Watrous get its share of provincial funding for its new hospital? Further if there is a waiting list for projects such as this, where is the Watrous Hospital on that list?

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 35 ask the government the following questions:

To the minister responsible for Information Services Corporation: for fiscal year 2004-2005, how does ISC compensate those who suffer financial loss due to system errors or delays? Does compensation claims come out of the government's consolidation fund, and how many such claims have been made to date, and how many have been approved, and what is the total dollar value of those claims? And the same question for the previous four years.

And also, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 35 ask the government the following question:

For the minister responsible for Information Services Corporation: for fiscal year 2004-2005 does ISC have an insurance fund to compensate those who suffer financial losses due to system delays or errors? If not, how many compensation claims handled and how many such claims

have been made to date and how many have been approved, and what is the total dollar value of those claims? And the same question for the previous three years.

I so present.

### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all of my colleagues here in the Legislative Assembly, a great looking group of students from Swift Current, Saskatchewan, Canada, Mr. Speaker, my hometown.

They are accompanied by Mr. John Foster, as well as Lynn Anderson. There are 22 of them, Mr. Speaker.

And O.M. Irwin School is one of the excellent middle schools in Swift Current that's doing a great job of providing an education to our children, notwithstanding the fact that a former staff member, a former teacher at O.M. Irwin, is currently the member for Rosthern, Mr. Speaker. The school was able to survive that and is doing an excellent job with the kids.

In any event, I would just ask all members to join with me today in welcoming these students here to their Legislative Assembly, and we hope that they enjoy the proceedings. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the member for Regina Qu'Appelle Valley.

**Hon. Mr. Wartman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and to all of my colleagues in the legislature here, a young man who is here as a summer student working in my office. David Limacher is sitting up in the west gallery there, standing now.

David was born in Regina and has lived his life in northwest Regina. He's attending the University of Regina, where he is studying administration — or pardon me economics and finance — and plans to go on to work on his certified financial analyst program, a very bright young man who I think will contribute a lot to the fabric of Saskatchewan over the years.

And he usually spends his summers at Katepwa Lake, where he golfs and wakeboards. And I'm told he's been golfing since he was five years old, so he's probably a top-notch golfer and really a wonderful addition to the staff in my office over the summer. So I'd ask you to all join me in welcoming him to the legislature.

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

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

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 28 students from St. George School in Saskatoon who are here today with their teacher, Ms. Debbie Troesch; principal, Anita Romanoff; two chaperones, Sandi Holt and Paulette MacFarlane.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce two guests, Mr. Speaker, who are seated in your gallery — two of the younger women in my life, the first a visitor from Nanaimo, British Columbia, Ms. Peggy Sluzalo; and her sister, my wife, Betty Calvert.

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

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

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too would like to join the member from Swift Current, the Leader of the Opposition, in welcoming students from O.M. Irwin.

It was way back in the 1900s when O.M. Irwin was designated as being the first middle years school in Saskatchewan. It was supposed to be sort of a pilot school, and the principal at that time, J.A. Dyer, went around the province and hired a few people he wanted to work with him. I was fortunately chosen for that staff and enjoyed my seven years there very much.

I remember Mr. Foster. He has obviously aged much better than I have. And so I would ask you to join with me to welcome the students from O.M. Irwin and Mr. Foster.

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

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

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In your gallery, Mr. Speaker, is a young lady who has joined us this afternoon that many members I think would recognize through her involvement on the provincial SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres) Board, Sandra Pratt. We certainly want to extend a warm welcome.

I understand chatting with her last evening at the reception, she's currently working, reaching out to young people . . . or young women in the community of Cochrane, Alberta. And we welcome Sandra to our Legislative Assembly.

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

### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

#### D-Day Ceremonies

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On June 6 of this year, countries on both sides of the Atlantic, Mr. Speaker, will

recognize the 60th anniversary of D-Day. The battle of Normandy in 1944 was by all accounts the turning points for the Allies in World War II.

For Canada this anniversary will hold special significance since the success of D-Day was mainly due to the brave and courageous efforts of our Canadian troops. Eighty thousand Canadians were involved in D-Day in 1944, but only one-quarter of them are still with us today.

The federal government will be sending 60 veterans to D-Day ceremonies in Normandy, France on June 6, Mr. Speaker. The government says this is all they could afford to send. But, Mr. Speaker, 70 government bureaucrats — that's seven zero — or so-called support staff will be accompanying those 60 veterans. Apparently that number is needed to ensure the security and efficient movement of our citizens through the ceremonies.

Any other veteran other than those 60, will have to pay their own way. This is how we treat those people who fought for our country. It's shameful, Mr. Speaker — absolutely shameful.

Cost to the sponsorship ad scandal, \$100 million. Cost to send the Governor General to the North Pole, \$5 million. Cost to send one Canadian veteran round trip to D-Day ceremonies in Normandy, \$3,000, Mr. Speaker. Cost for freedom, peace, and a way of life unequalled elsewhere in the world — priceless. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### Emergency Preparedness Week

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, May 2 to May 8 is Emergency Preparedness Week, and this year's theme is Prepare Now! Learn How!

Emergency Preparedness Week is intended to promote greater awareness, public education, and prevention activities. It reminds us that everyone has a responsibility in emergency preparedness and in decreasing the impact of disaster on people as well as the environment.

(13:45)

This week communities across the province and Canada will be participating in a variety of activities to promote safety precautions in their lives and workplaces. Mr. Speaker, each of us can support emergency preparedness by knowing the risks, having an emergency plan, and keeping necessary supplies on hand. Everyone, no matter where they live, may be threatened by natural or human-made disaster. In the past years, Saskatchewan communities have dealt with floods, forest and grass fires, and severe storms.

Mr. Speaker, keeping communities safe is a top priority for this government. Here in Saskatchewan we have a provincial emergency plan. We work closely with communities to enhance emergency planning and to ensure we are prepared to respond to natural or human-made threats, emergencies, or disasters.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in thanking all the public safety workers in Saskatchewan for their dedication and commitment to keeping us safe, and I invite everyone to get involved in this week's activities.

Thank you.

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

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

### Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres' Reception

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, last night I had the privilege of attending the SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres), the Saskatchewan association of rehab councillors, MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) reception.

SARC represents 72 non-profit agencies and the 70 SARCAN recycling depots in the province. These agencies provide resources and housing, and in many cases employment, to individuals with disabilities. Many individuals as a result of the hard work and commitment of SARC and SARCAN become financially self-sufficient and become full participating members of society.

The reception, Mr. Speaker, was very well done. We had the opportunity to meet with people from the member agencies. We had the opportunity to view goods that were produced by the members. In addition to that, there's a number of manufactured items that were there by way of furniture, cookbooks, recycled computers.

So I would like to ask all members to congratulate and thank all of the member agencies and each of the clients of SARC, to thank them very much for the excellent reception.

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

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

### Northern Teacher Education Program

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, last weekend I had the honour of attending the graduating ceremonies for the Northern Teacher Education Program in La Ronge. A total of 22 northerners received their Bachelor of Education degrees. Seven others received their Bachelor of Arts degrees. It was an exciting time for the graduates, their families, and friends from across the North.

Mr. Speaker, the NORTEP (Northern Teacher Education Program) program is unique and a model being used across Canada. It's based on the principle that northerners do not have to leave their families, homes, and the North to receive their post-secondary education.

Since it was founded 25 years ago, approximately 300 northerners have graduated from the program and most are teaching in northern communities. I would like to acknowledge

the foresight of many northern leaders who rose to the challenge of filling the need for northern teachers in their own communities. Mr. Speaker, one of those individuals is Keith Goulet, an educator and a former MLA for the Cumberland constituency.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations and Métis teachers are fundamental to the development of education for Aboriginal students. They play a vital role in ensuring school programs meet the needs of Aboriginal students and are consistent with the aspirations of the First Nations and Métis people. They carry into schools Aboriginal values, languages, and concepts and encourage the preservation of the students' cultural heritage. And they serve as valuable role models for their students, helping them develop cultural awareness and a positive self-image.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in congratulating everyone involved with the NORTEP/NORPAC (Northern Teacher Education Program/Northern Professional Access College) program and in particular this year's graduating class. Thank you.

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

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

#### **Beechy Ladies Royal Purple Curling Champs**

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Saskatchewan has a legendary and proud tradition as a hotbed for curling. And a team from the Rosetown-Elrose constituency has recently contributed another accomplishment to our long list of curling successes.

Congratulations to the Beechy Ladies Royal Purple curling team who returned from Kamloops, BC (British Columbia) with the 25th annual ladies Canadian national curling championship title.

The Beechy team — Sheryn Flynn, skip; Karen Sander, third; Sheila Flynn, second; and Cathy Kennedy, lead — won the Saskatchewan Royal Purple ladies playdowns in Swift Current this past November which advanced them to the Canadian championship in Kelowna . . . in Kamloops, pardon me.

The team came out victorious over all provinces, winning all eight games played. They won their final game 5-2 against the Northwest Territories team who had held a lock on the Canadian title for the past seven years. By winning this championship, it gives them an automatic entry into the 2005 playdowns being held in Swan River, Manitoba.

Congratulations to the Flynn team and good luck next year.

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

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

#### **St. George Orthodox Cathedral Celebrates 90th Anniversary**

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. St. George

Orthodox Cathedral has been an important part of the Regina community and particularly the east side of Regina for nearly as long as Saskatchewan has been a province — and way before this east end kid was born.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this year marks the 90th anniversary of St. George Orthodox Cathedral. And last Sunday, I was pleased to attend a festive dinner in celebration of its history and the role it plays in our lives and community.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first priorities of the Romanians who came to Regina in the early part of the 1900s was to build a church. St. George was built in 1914 and the cathedral was completed in 1960.

Today, St. George and its members reflect the diversity of Saskatchewan and the multiculturalism that we are all so proud of. Mr. Speaker, the members of St. George have included Greeks, Serbians, Ukrainians, and Eritreans who have either stayed involved with the cathedral or gone on to form their own congregations.

Next year we will celebrate our centennial as a province. St. George Orthodox Cathedral is a historic and visible reminder of the faith, courage, and endurance of the people who built Saskatchewan. Our province and the city of Regina have benefited greatly from the creativity of our Romanian immigrants.

I'm sure my colleagues will join me in congratulating the members of St. George Orthodox Cathedral for their faith and commitment to this province and on the church's 90th anniversary celebration.

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

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

#### **Habitat for Humanity**

**Mr. Merriman:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to take this opportunity to draw attention to the good work done in my home city of Saskatoon and throughout the province by the people behind Habitat for Humanity.

Habitat for Humanity describes itself as a non-profit ecumenical Christian housing ministry that seeks to eliminate poverty housing from the world and to make decent shelter a matter of conscience and action.

This worldwide organization provides affordable housing for people who could not otherwise hope to become homeowners. While the houses are sold to low-income people without profit or interest, there is definitely a great deal of investment by the new owners. They are expected to contribute 500 hours of labour, not only on their own houses but on other houses built through the auspices of Habitat for Humanity.

Mr. Speaker, this year four new homes will be built in my community, meaning there will be four families with roofs over their head that they can call their own.

One of these projects will be led by the students from Mount Royal and Bedford Road Collegiate. Another of the projects, the Cameco women's build, will be the first all-women's project. Another of the projects is named after Fred and Doreen Horner who donated a quarter of a million dollars to this group.

Like all worthy causes, Habitat for Humanity always needs new volunteers to help out with their ongoing projects. Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who make this cause a success.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Funding for Repairs to Diefenbaker Bridge

**Mr. Wall:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I had the privilege to travel to Saskatoon and Prince Albert and have some meetings in P.A. (Prince Albert) including one with the mayor.

Mr. Speaker, the community of P.A. is concerned about the NDP government living up to its responsibility to help repair the Diefenbaker bridge. When the bridge was built in the 1950s, the city and the province signed an agreement, an agreement, Mr. Speaker, to split the cost of any bridge repair that needed to be done.

The bridge is in desperate need of repair. The taxpayers of Prince Albert are doing their part. The taxpayers of P.A. in fact are doing more than their part. They're just getting the job done. They're going to fix that bridge and send a bill for the government's half to the Premier. The question though and the concern they have is that so far the government has been pretty stubborn. The government has refused to indicate that they're going to honour their share of the agreement.

So that's the question today to the Premier: will he honour his commitment to the taxpayers of Prince Albert and pay for his share, the government's share, of repairing the Diefenbaker bridge, the gateway to the North?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well as the hon. member will know and as many members in the legislature will know, the policy of the Department of Highways has been largely that — and we've been working with different municipalities to try and resolve some of these — that in jurisdictions where highways and roads pass through the boundaries, I should say in this particular case the city of Prince Albert, it is the responsibility of that particular municipality or jurisdiction to operate and maintain those particular, that particular infrastructure. That has been the case.

We will continue to work with the city, obviously, to try and find resolution. We see Prince Albert as an important link to economic development in the province. And having said that, though, it is largely the responsibility of the city as far as the

Department of Highways is concerned, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, there is an agreement. There is an agreement signed — I think in 1958 — between the city of Prince Albert, the taxpayers there, and the Government of Saskatchewan. And unless the minister can point out where it has any mumbo-jumbo about current agreements with municipalities where highways run through them, in that agreement, I think his answer is going to lack in terms of the people of Prince Albert.

Mr. Speaker, this is a question of priorities for the Premier of this province. The province's share of the bridge repair, we're able to tell, is about \$636,000. That's \$200,000 less than the Premier spent on his imaginary ethanol plant, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier has money to gamble on the stock market in Australia. He's got taxpayers' money to invest in risky ventures in Nashville and in Georgia. But when it comes to the basic function of government, (a) keeping your word, keeping your word and providing infrastructure, including for the people of P.A., they won't, they won't keep their word, Mr. Speaker. They break . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order, please, members. Order. Would the member put his question, please.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, here's the question: would the Premier honour the government's commitment to pay for its share for repairing Diefenbaker bridge?

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was feeling, it was feeling like old days listening to that again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if the member was not understanding in my last answer — and maybe I wasn't clear enough, Mr. Speaker — I was not suggesting that there wasn't an agreement. Because he is correct; there is an agreement.

Mr. Speaker, the engineers have indicated though, clearly, that the decking is not part of the structure itself. I think that . . . Well they can laugh. I mean, Mr. Speaker, the engineers I think are a lot more versed in this area than would be most of those people on that side of the House, Mr. Speaker. I listened with interest from the Leader of the Opposition who was an expert in gas prices at one time. And now I suppose he knows more than engineers do.

Mr. Speaker, the point is, the engineers have indicated the decking is not part of the structure. That's part of the responsibility of the city. We've conveyed that message to the city. We're happy to work within agreements that exist, Mr. Speaker. If there's anything that we can do, we will. But as far as the decking goes, engineers say that's part of the responsibility of the city, Mr. Speaker.



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

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, the city of Prince Albert, their engineers and engineers that they've contracted, find what the minister had to say just now laughable. Imagine this — the Government of Saskatchewan is saying, yes, we have an agreement to help keep the bridge in good repair, the Diefenbaker bridge. But the decking on the bridge, the actual part that is driven on by vehicles, that's not part of the bridge, Mr. Speaker. That's the response of the government.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier has run out of his own promises to break. He has broken all of Mr. Romanow's promises. Now he's gone to work on breaking the promises of Tommy Douglas.

Mr. Speaker, in the late 1950s this NDP government, Mr. Douglas's government, made an agreement with the city of P.A.. I guess we can't ask him, but I'm pretty sure that Mr. Douglas would have assumed that that agreement was for the top of the bridge, the decking on the bridge.

And so we ask the Premier again: will he keep his commitment to the taxpayers of the city of Prince Albert?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — Well point number one, Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition refer to Premier Douglas when his colleague in the backbench over there was calling Mr. Douglas the worst premier, the worst thing that ever happened to the province of Saskatchewan. Now which one is it? Which one is it?

Point number two, Mr. Speaker, in the budget that's currently under the debate in this legislature this government has committed virtually \$300 million to the Department of Highways for the rebuilding of our roadways, the maintenance of our roadways across the province. Mr. Speaker, those are record dollars going into the rebuilding and maintenance of our highways. And this opposition votes against that kind of budget.

Point number three, Mr. Speaker, we will work with municipalities, we'll be working with the city of Prince Albert to achieve the goals that we all share, which are good-quality highways, good access for the economy of Saskatchewan.

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

(14:00)

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the Premier is now engaged in the debate. And here's, here's a chance for him just to be, here's a chance for him to be direct with the people of the city of Prince Albert, the people of the province who expect there to be an appropriate gateway to the North.

There is an agreement signed by Mr. Douglas, 1958, with the city of P.A. that the NDP, that whoever the Government of Saskatchewan was, would honour their . . . paying for their half of the repairs that were needed to the Diefenbaker bridge. Repairs are currently being underway; taxpayers in P.A. are picking up the entire tab. Yes or no: will the Premier honour his agreement, his contract with the taxpayers of Prince Albert?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Calvert:** — This government will honour our contract with the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker — a contract that was earned through the last provincial election, a contract which was forged rejecting that particular party.

So what have they done, Mr. Speaker, having been rejected by the people, having their policies being rejected by the people? Well the first thing they do is dump the leader. That's the first thing they do, and they elect a new leader. But you know that's not regained the confidence of Saskatchewan people in the Saskatchewan Party, so you know what they're trying to do, Mr. Speaker? It's apparent to me and it's apparent to people across the province. If you can't rise, if you can't rise to something better, you try and bring down the opponents.

Mr. Speaker, they're not going to bring down this party because we're working with the people of Saskatchewan, we're going to work with the people of Prince Albert. And as this budget indicates, we have a commitment to the highways of Saskatchewan.

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

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

#### Participation of Providers in Child Care Planning

**Mr. Wall:** — Well that's very special, Mr. Speaker, that's very special. But the Premier ought to just answer the question: is his word worth anything or is he going to continue to break promises to the people of the province?

Mr. Speaker, also in Prince Albert we had a chance to meet with the P.A. Child Care Directors Association.

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. I would ask the members to allow the question to be put. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday we also had the chance to meet with the P.A. Child Care Directors Association. The child care community in Saskatchewan is excited about the federal government's recent injection of 31 million for child care in Saskatchewan over five years. However, child care directors across the province are concerned that the government, the NDP government is not properly expending the money and they will not properly expend dollars they haven't yet announced that they're going to be spending.

And, Mr. Speaker, according to a recent report in *Today's Parent* magazine, Saskatchewan scores extremely low on issues

of the availability and quality of child care spaces. The NDP government has already allocated about \$20 million of this funding to new spaces. They are still to have allocated 10 to \$11 million.

The question is this: will the Premier commit to work with the front-line workers, the front-line people in this regard, health . . . or child care providers in the province of Saskatchewan to develop a plan for what's remaining and to ensure what is being spent is being spent appropriately and most effectively?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister responsible for Community Resources and Employment.

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Well thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And I have met with representatives from Prince Albert and we had a very worthwhile discussion.

One of the things I committed to them, we issued a press release recently where we are undertaking a two-month consultation with all the early learning and care providers of children ages zero to six. At the end of that two-month period, they will give recommendations back to us. And I committed to sitting down with them to review those recommendations, to move forward on the best framework for child care in this province that we can have together.

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

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

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, child care workers are concerned that although we're into the second year of funding from the federal government, there is still no long-term plan from our government in terms of child care, in terms of their concerns of quality and affordability of spaces. The association says the NDP government is only opening new spaces and is not as concerned as it ought to be about the quality and the affordability of those spaces.

They promise to consult with child care directors. Mr. Speaker, they promise to consult with them. The child care directors, the people involved in this industry had a request of this . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please, members. We continue to get interruptions into the oral questions and I would ask members to restrain . . . or refrain themselves from that. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, child care workers in this province, their association, they want to be involved in the long-term planning. That's what they're asking this government.

They're saying, we are the hands-on providers of service, of this important service, of this care. We are on the front line and we want to have a hand in crafting the strategy for the province. They are saying, they are saying that this government is not listening, is not listening to them, is not inviting their participation.

I'd ask the minister to respond directly to their concerns. Why is the government not involving those who know best about the future of child care in the province of Saskatchewan?

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

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

**Hon. Ms. Crofford:** — Mr. Speaker, first of all, the very classifying of children as an industry I think points out the differences between the members opposite and ourselves.

But I will say that we have been very clear with the child care providers that they are part of this consultation. I've met with them personally. I've made a commitment to visit the results with them.

But I will say that the 20 million that the member opposite referred to from the federal government was 100 per cent allocated to support the licensed child care sector — 100 per cent — so if that is not adequate support, I'm not exactly sure. When the federal government provided 800,000, we put in an extra 2 million from the province.

So, Mr. Speaker, we've had a 72 per cent increase since 1992 and people could argue, and I think it's a good public debate, what sufficient child care is. But we have put substantial resources into it and substantial improvement since the '80s.

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

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

#### Natural Gas Costs

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister Responsible for SaskEnergy. Yesterday the minister admitted the NDP government is forcing Saskatchewan families to pay inflated prices for natural gas. And the minister also admitted that some of his own Crown corporations are dropping SaskEnergy and buying gas from a private sector supplier to save money.

Now the minister says his NDP government is developing a plan . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order please, members. This is the third time I've had to request members not to interrupt when questions are being put. I recognize the member for Cypress Hills.

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, the minister says that his NDP government is developing a plan to charge a penalty to any customer who leaves SaskEnergy after they find out the NDP is charging too much for natural gas. Now, Mr. Speaker, this is bizarre because this is the same minister who spoke glowingly about the importance of open market opportunities in the sale and distribution of gas. He said competition was good. And now he's talking about charging businesses a penalty for leaving SaskEnergy as a supplier after they find out they've been charged too much.

Mr. Speaker, what is the minister going to do? Is he going to establish a natural gas police force? Maybe set up a toll booth on the borders of the province for people so that he can charge anyone leaving the province for the natural gas that they used

while they were in Saskatchewan. What is the minister's plan?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of a natural gas police force, I really think we should have it on the other side of the House given the inflated language that we see from the member opposite where the member talks about inflated prices that we're forcing Saskatchewan families to pay. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Again, in four of the last seven years in Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan families enjoyed the lowest prices in natural gas in all of Canada. The other years were the second lowest prices in North America, as I understand it. Now the members can say that those are inflated prices. I beg to differ. I think what's inflated here, Mr. Speaker, is the rhetoric from the members opposite.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, if the minister cares to check the record, I think he would find that 57 out of the last 84 months Saskatchewan families have paid higher natural gas prices than was necessary.

Mr. Speaker, it looks like the NDP's long-term plan is to turn SaskEnergy into "Hotel California." I'd like to just maybe hum a few bars of that song, or maybe you'd rather not. We'll just, we'll just quote the words from the song. From "Hotel California," "You can check out any time . . . but you can never leave."

And according to media reports, the NDP is planning to implement special exit charges to any customer who leaves SaskEnergy to take advantage of lower natural gas prices from private sector suppliers. Mr. Speaker, establishing exit charges when customers leave SaskEnergy will chase any competition right out of the province and eliminate any incentive for the NDP government to offer competitive gas prices to Saskatchewan customers.

Why is the NDP more committed to chasing competition out of the province than in offering lower and more competitive natural gas prices to Saskatchewan families?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, the member quotes popular songs, in this case from the Eagles. I'm not sure whether it was Jackson Browne, the Doobie Brothers that had one called, "Running on Empty." And that reminds me of the members opposite when I see the questioning from the members . . . (inaudible) . . . in this question period.

I can't believe it, Mr. Speaker. Here again they go with their creative accounting, their creative figuring. They always run out figures. We always have to check them because we can't believe what they bring forward in this Legislative Assembly. More often than not their figures are wrong. I can tell you that four of the last seven years Saskatchewan residential customers had the best natural gas prices in all of Canada. Full stop. Period.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's true; there is something running on empty around this province. And it's that NDP government. They're running on empty, Mr. Speaker.

Is the minister fully aware that it was the NDP government's interference at SaskEnergy that caused the massive deficits at SaskEnergy's gas cost variance account? That was the issue in the first place. And the decision to keep natural gas prices artificially low a few years ago was a political decision by the NDP, not a business decision by SaskEnergy. And it's a political decision by the NDP today to keep natural gas prices artificially high.

So why is the NDP solution is to establish new penalty charges on anyone who leaves SaskEnergy, chase out the private sector competition, and along with it any hope that Saskatchewan families any time soon will have lower natural gas prices?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister for SaskEnergy.

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it would be very refreshing in this Legislative Assembly in this province if the opposition actually stood for something and made their position clear. Now if the member is saying, based — and I get this from his question — if he's saying that SaskEnergy should move to the kind of system that gas companies have in Alberta and other parts of the globe where you, where you change the prices on a monthly basis, then the member should say that. That's what the member should say, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, if the government here . . . if the government here is being accused for making the decision a few years ago to do something to protect people in Saskatchewan from rapidly escalating natural gas prices, Mr. Speaker, then we stand accused, and we're guilty of that. Thank you very much.

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

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

#### **Funding for Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization**

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. For almost 30 years the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization, or VIDO, has led the fight in understanding infectious diseases and in developing vaccines

to combat them.

Already one of the centrepieces of the innovation strategy of the next century, VIDO is about to become home to the state-of-the-art international vaccine centre that will establish the University of Saskatchewan as a leading player in the battle against devastating diseases like SARS (severe acute respiratory syndrome), BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy), and the West Nile virus — except for one thing, Mr. Speaker. Without stable long-term funding from this NDP government, VIDO may be forced to fold.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier make leading edge research a priority in this province by committing today to long-term funding for VIDO in the amount of \$3.5 million per year?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I would note that in the budget which those members voted against, the budget contained a \$2 million increase in funding for advanced research. I would note that in the budgets, for those members who voted against, over the past six years we provided \$2.9 million to VIDO. We remain committed to VIDO. We remain committed to discussing with them how to move forward that advancement, and I'd appreciate for once if the member opposite would actually recognize the good work that is being done on this side of the House.

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, VIDO director, Dr. Lorne Babiuk is a world-class researcher. He spends half his time — 70 per cent of his time, he said — searching for little pots of money from this government. Is that the best use for a world-class researcher? I say not, Mr. Speaker. He is working against diseases like SARS, West Nile virus, and BSE. He should be focusing on the establishment of a state-of-the-art international vaccine centre at the University of Saskatchewan. Instead Mr. Babiuk says the organization is living, and I quote, "a hand-to-mouth existence."

No, Mr. Speaker, I am not going to compliment this government on a hand-to-mouth existence for VIDO.

(14:15)

Again, I quote, he says:

I pray, I beg, and I do everything I can to scrape enough money together to keep VIDO alive.

Mr. Speaker, VIDO is a central part of the innovation strategy at the University of Saskatchewan, designed to attract top-notch researchers who will conduct leading edge research into infectious diseases. This work has the potential to save millions of health care dollars, and to attract millions more in investment.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier listening?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I think it is time that this member explain to this House how it is that he could vote against a budget to increase funding to the Innovation and Science Fund, which is one of the options that we use to fund VIDO. I would be very interested to see why it is that that member can vote against the increased funding that we have provided to the University of Saskatchewan, which is a major partner with the VIDO. I would be interested to hear how that member opposite can stand in this House and attack the government over making more money available to post-secondary education, more money available to research, and at the same time stand in this House and attack us for doing so. I find that passing strange, and think the member opposite and his constituents deserve much better.

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, let's be clear with the people of Saskatchewan. This government increased funding by \$1.8 million for the entire innovation fund. The minister of . . . the former minister of Finance from that government is very critical of that operation.

Mr. Speaker, it's a matter of priorities. When the government's money-losing phone company in Vancouver calls for cash, the NDP writes a cheque for \$15 million, no questions asked. When the CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) wants to make a \$15 million stock market gamble on the Toronto Stock Exchange, the NDP says, no problem.

But when the University of Saskatchewan comes calling and says VIDO needs \$3.5 million to carry on with leading research and development, to attract world-class scientists, to attract millions of dollars from the private sector, the answer from this Premier and from this government is no.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier get his priorities straight? Will he invest in the future of Saskatchewan by committing to provide VIDO with long-term funding to the tune of \$3.5 million per year instead of gambling money away on money-losing ventures across the world?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I will add this request of the member opposite to the long list of additional spending that he seeks and then votes against when we provide it in the budget. I will add this on to the request of the members opposite who say that we've got to find new money for property tax relief, for the members opposite who say that we've got to find more money to deal with health care; we've got to find more money for post-secondary capital. We've got to find more money to keep

tuition fees down. And we have to do that without raising taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you this: that on April 22, that the members . . . that the VIDO, the University of Saskatchewan, and the officials from my department met, discussed this issue, and that we are looking indeed at long-term funding for VIDO. What is still yet to be debated is what the value of that is, but we are committed to VIDO. We are committed to the work that they're doing.

And I would ask the member opposite to set aside his partisan rhetoric and support a budget that provides more money.

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Mr. Speaker, I can assure the hon. minister when it comes to innovation, when it comes to students in Saskatchewan, I will make no apologies for standing up for them in this House.

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — I will remind the minister about the microgravity drop-shaft tower. The feds committed \$13 million to that project. NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) was committed to that project. When they came to this government asking them for \$8.6 million, they couldn't find it. The cupboard was bare.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier take the question and commit to the funding now — not on the minister's time schedule, which seems to be delayed lately — but now so Mr. Babiuk can do his work? Will the Premier make that commitment in this House today?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — I hope question period's almost over because the cost of the member opposite's requests keep growing and growing and growing as we get along here.

What we are taking a look at, what we are working with the university on is what the amount of funding is and where it should be committed. We have provided 2 million more in the Innovation and Science Fund. There are other demands on those funds. We need to see what the priority list looks like from the University of Saskatchewan and then we'll make the decision.

But we need to have a clear set of priorities, and I would appreciate a clear commitment from the member opposite to support a budget that increases funding for research.

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

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister responsible for the Crown Management Board.

#### Immigrant Nominee Program

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to advise the House that Saskatchewan's immigrant nominee program is opening up to bring more people to our province.

Under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, the province's target for this fiscal year is 300 nominations — a significant increase over past years and the fulfillment of an election promise.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about election promises in this legislature. And if you turn to page 33 of our platform document, you will find the following statement, and I quote:

We'll welcome 200 economic immigrants, and their family members, to our province next year under the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program.

In fact, today's target exceeds our campaign commitment. A promise made, Mr. Speaker, a promise kept, Mr. Speaker — and in fact exceeded, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make one other point. This crowd opposite are full of character assassinations and we know exactly what they're doing, Mr. Speaker. It comes out of the Republican Party documents where you . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. Order, please. Order, please. Order, please. I would, I would just want to bring the member to order. The item on the proceedings is ministerial statements. I would ask her to continue with her ministerial statement.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Over the coming months the program will open up to more foreign students, more skilled workers, and more opportunities for business owners. I'm confident, Mr. Speaker, these enhancements will enable us to meet or exceed our nomination target for this year. This could mean, Mr. Speaker, approximately 1,000 new people coming to our province to help build our province and our economy.

Effective immediately, the government is allowing foreign post-secondary students who graduate in our province and get work in their field to apply to the province's immigrant nominee program. There are about 1,700 foreign students currently studying in Saskatchewan who can apply to the program after graduation.

In the coming months we'll open the program for Saskatchewan employers who want . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order. With my apologies to the member, I would ask members to just allow the ministerial statement to be heard without interruption. I once again recognize the Minister Responsible for Immigration.

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — In the coming months, Mr. Speaker, we will open the program for Saskatchewan employers who want to permanently hire a foreign-qualified, foreign-skilled worker.

The program's current skill shortage list covers about 10,000 jobs in our province, or 2 per cent of the job market. By opening up the program's skilled worker provisions, we will enable Saskatchewan employers to hire qualified immigrants for about 45 per cent of Saskatchewan's labour market, meaning the immigrant nominee program will cover about 200,000 jobs in the province.

We also intend to make the program more flexible for immigrants who want to own and operate a business in Saskatchewan. And we'll do that by increasing the range of businesses that will be eligible for the program, such as those in the retail, service, and tourism businesses. We're also working with other economic development agencies such as STEP (Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership Inc.), Industry and Resources, Ag and Food, and Tourism Saskatchewan to develop effective supports for immigrant entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, I am confident and the business community is confident and the immigrant community is confident that these measures, combined, will enable Saskatchewan to attract many more immigrants from around the world — women, men, and families — whose optimism, determination, and vision will help us to energize the province and build a bright and prosperous future for all Saskatchewan citizens.

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

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

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like . . . appreciate the opportunity to respond to the minister's statement.

The Saskatchewan Party certainly encourages and supports immigrants coming to Saskatchewan. Saskatchewan was built by immigrants and we all are immigrants to this province, and our grandfathers and great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers came to this province and built this province. So we certainly share the understanding of the need for immigrants into this province. But, Mr. Speaker, the minister's statement kind of . . . well let's put it that talk is cheap.

As we know, Mr. Speaker, in this province what we need is economic growth. Now we have a situation where people are leaving this province. We have our young people leaving this province in droves. And so, Mr. Speaker, this announcement is really hollow when you take into a fact that people are leaving this province in such numbers, but we are encouraging immigrants to come to this number . . . come to this province.

Mr. Speaker, we have to have the economic development; we have to have the growth. We have to have the opportunity and the jobs in this province so when those immigrants come to this province, that they stay in this province; that they just don't come to this province and go elsewhere as soon as they can to get jobs, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister's statement and the government's election platform really leaves a lot of doubt in the people's minds in this province, Mr. Speaker. And I'd just like to refer to some statistics, Mr. Speaker, about what this government has been doing in the past. This NDP government's been in power since

1991. And as an example of what they've been doing, Mr. Speaker, some numbers that go back to 1998. There was six applicants for the Canada-Saskatchewan Immigration Agreement. There's five nominations, Mr. Speaker. In 1991, 50 applicants; 23 nominations were approved. In 2000-2001, 58 applications, Mr. Speaker; 20 nominations approved. And in the year 2001-2002, 26 applications were received; 25 nominations, Mr. Speaker. In 2002-2003, 155 applications; only 52 nominations, Mr. Speaker.

So the government does the talk but they don't do the walk, Mr. Speaker. And it's stated right in their news release that under the Saskatchewan immigrant nominee program, the province's target for 2004-2005 is 300 nominations. Well that's fine. They can have targets. They can . . . People can nominate but are they going to be approved, Mr. Speaker?

And it goes on to say that students who study in Saskatchewan could apply. Well I'm certain that many people will apply but we have to see what the end result of those applications . . . how many of them are approved, Mr. Speaker.

And I take some interest in what the minister for Immigration and the member from Saskatoon Nutana . . . I sat on the same committee with the member concerning foreign farm land ownership laws. And that member fought tooth and nail to restrict ownership of farm land just to Saskatchewan people. And the Saskatchewan Party were out in front to lead the charge to open up farm land ownership to other people in Canada and possibly to people around the world, which would encourage immigrants to come to this province. That member fought against it and thank goodness that member from Saskatoon Nutana lost that argument. Not only in the committee that member lost, but also lost that argument in cabinet and in her own caucus.

So, Mr. Speaker, we'll certainly be watching with a lot of interest about what actually happens out of this announcement, not just what the words are that were announced today. So thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** — Why is the member from Swift Current on his feet?

**Mr. Wall:** — Mr. Speaker, to seek leave to introduce some guests.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Swift Current has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — The member may proceed.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Wall:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to all the members of the Legislative Assembly, it's a pleasure to introduce yet another group from the grade school O.M. Irwin in my hometown of Swift Current. Mr. Speaker, there are 21 grade 8 students in the east gallery and with them is Sue Waker and Miranda Peterson.

Mr. Speaker, there have been fully four groups come through the Legislative Assembly from O.M. Irwin School, grade 8 students. And I certainly hope that they are able to observe a little bit of the proceedings and enjoy them.

And, Mr. Speaker, at this time I'd ask all members of the Assembly to join me in welcoming them here, to their Legislative Assembly.

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

(14:30)

## ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 267 through 270 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses to 267, 268, 269, and 270 have been submitted.

I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask leave of the Assembly to move a motion of urgent and pressing necessity under rule 49.

**The Speaker:** — The member from Prince Albert Northcote has requested leave to move a motion. Would the member please briefly state the nature of the motion or read the motion into the record?

### MOTION UNDER RULE 49

#### Protection for Consumers from Rising Gas Prices

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — I will, Mr. Speaker. What the motion is and the intent of the motion is to bring attention to the federal government of the rising energy costs and ask them to work with the provinces to ensure that consumers are receiving fair value for what they're paying at the pumps.

**The Speaker:** — The member has asked for leave to move a motion with respect to energy prices. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Leave has been granted. The member may proceed. I recognize the member for Prince Albert Northcote.

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

**Mr. Lautermilch:** — Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to say that as all consumers are very concerned in terms of the amount that they're being asked to pay at the pumps these days, that it was important that we as legislators, people who represent the people of Saskatchewan, have a

discussion about this — bring forward some thoughts as it may assist us in maybe better understanding why the prices are what they are, ensuring the federal government is well aware of some of the concerns that we have as it relates to their energy policies. Not only in their tax levels, their value-added taxes that they impose upon fuel across this country, but as well the way they're treating our industry and treating our province as it relates to equalization — and really that's what I want to address today.

Mr. Speaker, I think everyone understands that as crude oil driven by international markets is reaching the \$40-a-barrel US (United States) level, that it's going to impact on fuel prices. And consumers in Saskatchewan right now are paying just under 90 cents a litre for gas when they fill up their vehicles, and it is an awful lot. And, Mr. Speaker, it is a cost that has for us in the province — and for us a nation — the potential to dramatically impact on everything that we do.

If you look at our province — whether it's manufacturing or mining or whether it's forestry or agriculture, whether it's the transportation industry — I think it's quite clear that we know all of these are high energy consuming industries. And that really is the nature of our province in that we are involved in all of these different industries. So all of us as consumers, whether it's industrial or whether it's at a personal level, are impacted by rising costs and rising energy costs.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well, I think all people understand that there are a number of factors that will be involved in setting the price at the pumps. Certainly we talked about the price of crude oil being a cost that's added in, refining, distribution, marketing, retail overhead, federal and provincial taxes. And so all of these things have an impact on costs, and I think it's as well fair to say that people understand that this is an industry that is reviewed periodically by the federal government to determine whether or not there is fairness in the retail price of fuel at the pumps.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that this government and this province very much supports the oil and gas industry — the producers who spend hundreds of millions of dollars here in our province every year, creating jobs and developing our oil fields and our natural gas fields. And we very much appreciate the work that they do.

And I think it's also fair to say that we on this side of the House understand that the oil producing companies are not price makers; they're price takers in Western Canada. They don't set the international price of crude. This is not a large enough industry here in Western Canada to do that. It's set in an international marketplace, so our industry here in Saskatchewan basically moves and receives the international price set by others other than our oil and gas sector here in Saskatchewan.

But I think it's also fair to say that all consumers recognize that provincial governments play a role in the cost of fuel. Federal governments play a role in the cost of fuel. And I'd like to, if I could, just take a couple of minutes to explain the Government of Saskatchewan's role as it relates to the cost of retail gas here in the province.

We have, for some 11 years now, had a consistent

15-cent-a-litre provincial tax on fuel. It hasn't gone up, Mr. Speaker, nor has it gone down. It's been flat for some 11 years.

But, Mr. Speaker, on a federal level there are a number of different taxes that are imposed by the federal government that are not a flat rate as our provincial tax is, and most provincial tax is. There's federal excise tax that changes. There is a goods and services tax on fuel which as the price of fuel increases the amount that's generated by the federal government also increases. So as the price of oil and natural gas goes up in this province and in this country, the federal government very much benefits by incremental revenues.

I'm told that the estimates . . . that the federal government generates somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$250 million a year in taxes on the sale of fuel. And I would assume now as the prices increase, given the value-added taxes that the federal government has on fuel, their revenue base will increase proportionally.

And so I think this motion, Mr. Speaker, is asking the federal government to have a look at the general revenue that they're generating through the sale of fuel, and to the consumers. We're also in this motion asking for the federal government to convene a meeting of the corporate and consumer affairs ministers from across the country to ensure that Saskatchewan's consumers are receiving a fair, a fair price for what they're paying at the pumps for gas.

Now Mr. Speaker, I want to keep my remarks brief today. Before I do move the motion, I want to however make a few comments as it relates to the federal government's treatment of this province as it relates to our resource sector and our ability to grow and build a strong and a vibrant economy here in Saskatchewan, using oil and gas as part of the base for our economic activity.

I indicated earlier, Mr. Speaker, that the petroleum sector, the oil and gas sector, have been very, very active here in Saskatchewan. We changed the royalty and taxation rates here a couple of years ago that makes Saskatchewan very, very competitive. I want to say and I want to commend, Mr. Speaker, that industry for stepping up to the plate as they said they would. They indicated to us that a competitive royalty and taxation structure would ensure that they would be investing millions and millions of dollars, and we've seen them, Mr. Speaker, do just that.

In 19 . . . or in 2003, pardon me, there was something in the neighbourhood of 4,200 natural gas wells drilled, which was an increase of 20 per cent over 2002. We've seen the bonus bids — the amount that they spend to purchase the right to be able to explore and to drill and exploit our resource — reach record numbers.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of this revenue is revenue that could go towards support for Saskatchewan families in health care and more competitive taxes, for building better roads, for building a stronger base for our economy. But, Mr. Speaker, federal government policy doesn't allow that to happen because, through a system called equalization, they have chosen to claw back in some cases 125 per cent of the revenue that this province generates from the petroleum industry here in our

province.

And, Mr. Speaker, it's patently unfair. It's patently unfair because it penalizes our province for being a resource-rich province in a way that — if you look at the industry and if you look at our country — is not fair because they choose to look at Saskatchewan and base their models on five provinces as opposed to ten. So it really does skew Saskatchewan's, I guess, place in terms of the ability to generate revenue from that particular sector.

And, Mr. Speaker, these aren't Government of Saskatchewan figures, and these aren't words that come from provincial politicians on the government side. These are results of a study done by Thomas Courchene, a very well-known Canadian who is probably one of the foremost experts on equalization, who's done an analysis of equalization and Saskatchewan's ability to generate wealth for the people of this province from our oil and gas industry. And his report to Canada and to the federal government is clear, and he clearly indicates that Saskatchewan is getting a very raw deal on equalization.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's also fair to say that the federal government has made some movement. And in some areas they've made some changes that are helpful, but they haven't solved the problem. And we've got a \$300 million problem here that isn't going to go away, and it can't be wished away. And, Mr. Speaker, it's not right that the people of Saskatchewan should be penalized for developing their resource sector, for developing their oil and gas sector here in this province. It's not right.

And how can it be right? How can it be right, Mr. Speaker, when . . . and I will give you a very concrete example. In the year 2001-2002, on the sale of Crown leases, which is bids in an open marketplace that industry puts forth, bids to purchase the right to develop oil and gas in a sector and in an area — this province generated in that year some \$61.483 million. And, Mr. Speaker, you know what was clawed back by the federal government — \$145 million. Mr. Speaker, that's 235 per cent of what this province generated in the sale of those leases, and it's wrong, Mr. Speaker.

It's wrong, Mr. Speaker, because it's not what this country was based on. And this country is based on fairness. This country is based on fair treatment for all provinces. And, Mr. Speaker, how can we be developing a resource in the interest of the people of this province and remaining competitive as a province when the federal government puts in place an equalization formula that basically tells us, you're better off to shut your industry in because we're going to take more away from you than you're generating in revenue by 235 per cent, Mr. Speaker? And I say to you that that's part of the signal we want to send to the federal government.

Number one, your value-added taxes and the money that you're taking out of this province as it relates to fuels tax. As the price of fuel goes up, crude oil goes up. And as the price of gasoline goes up, you're generating more per litre in revenue. You're taking more money from the consumers out of this province and from industry of this province; you're taking it to Ottawa. And at the same time, at a provincial level as it relates to equalization, you're taking 235 per cent in some cases of what



we're able to generate in revenue from that same industry.

And so I think, Mr. Speaker, what it speaks to is fairness. And it speaks to the new Prime Minister. And it speaks to the new Minister of Finance. And I think it begs for a solution from the parliamentarians in Ottawa. It begs for a solution that treats Saskatchewan fairly.

And, Mr. Speaker, you know they've set up some special arrangements with some of the Maritime provinces, where they've capped the equalization number at 70 per cent. And how can it be, Mr. Speaker, when they can cap some provinces at 70 per cent, and our province . . . for every dollar we take in in revenue, they take in some cases \$1.20, in some cases \$1.25, and in some cases \$2.35. How can that be, and how can it be fair, Mr. Speaker? And I say, it cries for a change.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, I was looking all through this session for an opportunity to speak to the equalization issue. And I am so very pleased to be joining this debate today because I know people involved in the oil and gas sector who see potential here in this province, and who know that it's a competitive place to do business because of the royalty and taxation structure we put in place.

(14:45)

And, Mr. Speaker, I know the industry understand there is room for growth and there is potential for growth. And I think, Mr. Speaker, it mystifies them to understand how a national government can penalize a province like Saskatchewan — who desires very, very much to be a have province and not dependent on equalization — but how they can penalize this province to the degree that they have and how they can value-add taxation and take money when prices of fuel are increasing, ever-increasing, because of the price of natural gas, when the federal government, the national government, takes more and more money out of our province and takes it right down to Ottawa, Mr. Speaker.

And does it come back in the form of equalization? The answer is, of course not because we are penalized for having that industry here. If we were to shut our industry down in the year 2002, we would have been better off fiscally as it relates to the money generated by the provincial government — the revenue that we use to produce roads and highways and a good quality of health care and a good quality of education.

But, Mr. Speaker, we chose not to. We chose to develop that industry, to ensure that we were competitive, to ensure that young Saskatchewan men and women would be working in the oil patch, that they'd be working on the rigs, that they'd be working in seismic, and they'd be drilling in the oil patch areas, and we would see new expansion in areas like Senlac. Mr. Speaker, we worked with industry to ensure that we reaped the benefits of that resource.

But on the other hand, when you see the federal government taking away those opportunities from Saskatchewan young people, I say shame. And, Mr. Speaker, what we are asking for is fairness. We are asking for the federal government to relook at the GST (goods and services tax) component and the *ad valorem* taxation as it relates to consumer fuel because we

know it's an imposition and impacts on our ability to grow this industry.

Mr. Speaker, it impacts on agriculture; of course it does. It's a large energy consuming industry that we have here in the province. But it also impacts on forestry because everything that is done in that forestry sector is a consumer of fuel — the machinery that operate it, the mills that mill the timber that comes from our resource, the pulp and the paper industry, and it all impacts.

Mr. Speaker, the impact is on our mining sector — potash and uranium, base metals, and gold.

Mr. Speaker, it's on our transportation system. We have a growing transportation system here in Saskatchewan dependent on getting our products to export markets. We're probably the largest exporting province in Canada. And so clearly energy is an important matter for us.

And so we're asking, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government would look at bringing together ministers to ensure first of all that our consumers are getting a fair shake and a fair share — you know, a fair shake and a reasonable price for what they're paying at the pumps, and that there's no particular sector of the chain from the wellhead to the gas pump and to the nozzle, that there's fairness throughout.

And I say, Mr. Speaker, there have been studies done before that will show that there is fairness. I think that every time the price of fuel increases to 85, 90 cents a litre as it is right now, consumers are wondering if there is fairness. And I think it's a reasonable thing to have a look at this situation to ensure that in fact our consumers here in the province are treated fairly.

And I say again, Mr. Speaker, very important that we keep before the federal government our concerns as it relates to equalization and our determination to ensure that Saskatchewan people are treated fairly.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, as well there are groups in this province who are coming forward in support of this government's position as it relates to equalization. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that there was a release issued just on May 6. It indicates that SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) and SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association) are both supporters and strong supporters in our government's initiatives to change the equalization because they see opportunities for their people that they represent through change. And they see flexibility that could be gained through change, and through change and approach by the federal government.

And I want to commend them for their support of this Finance minister, this Premier, and this government as we move forward on assuming the . . . and asking the federal government to assume a fair position as it relates to equalization.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be time to move the motion that I had spoken to. And so I move, seconded by the member from Canora-Pelly:

That this Assembly call upon the federal government to

immediately call a meeting of provincial consumer affairs ministers to ensure consumers are not unduly impacted by gasoline prices that create unfair windfalls, and that the federal government act to protect consumers in light of the massive revenues they will receive from the increased *ad valorem* tax regime.

I so move.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly:

This Assembly call upon the federal government to immediately call a meeting of the provincial consumer affairs ministers to ensure consumers are not unfairly impacted by gasoline prices that create unfair windfalls, and that the federal government act to protect consumers in light of the massive revenues they will receive from the increased *ad valorem* tax regime.

Debate resumes on the motion. I recognize the member for Canora-Pelly.

**Mr. Krawetz:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I've looked at the motion that the hon. member has put forward before this Assembly for emergency debate this afternoon, there's no question that the timing is in fact very good. That today, as we look across Canada and we see the price of a barrel, the WTI (West Texas Intermediate) price of a barrel of crude at almost \$40 — \$39.58 US — indeed this is a very critical situation.

So, Mr. Minister, as I've looked at the text of the motion, I have no trouble supporting the motion.

However there are a few comments that the mover has made that at the end of my remarks I would hope that I can set the record straight in terms of some of the comments made, as I was present at a meeting in Ottawa with the Minister of Finance, where the Minister of Finance brought forward Saskatchewan's position and he indicated very clearly that there needs to be a treatment of Saskatchewan that was indeed fair. And I have no problem with that. But some of the comments that the member has made tend to leave the situation not totally explained. And I'll try to do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the price of a barrel of oil today and the fact that we are over 90 cents in many Canadian cities, it's not a new situation. It's not new in the province of Saskatchewan that we would raise the concern about the price of fuel and the fact that the federal government charges a 7 per cent GST tax that is not only on the initial costs of a litre of gasoline, but it also taxes the tax. And I think that that's the position that the member opposite has taken — this is unfair.

And what we see, Mr. Speaker, is if we look at the release today from various groups across the country, we see that the Canadian taxpayers' association is accusing Ottawa today of tax gouging. And, Mr. Speaker, they estimate that the Government of Canada receives \$1.4 billion from the GST (goods and services tax) revenue on the current fuel prices — \$1.4 billion.

Mr. Speaker, that is a huge amount of money. And as people go to the pumps and see 89.9 cents a litre or 94 cents a litre as the case is in Montreal with today's price, they must recognize that the federal government is taking a huge amount of money and in fact is benefiting from the fact that the price of a barrel of crude oil is up to nearly \$40.

Mr. Speaker, one of the expectations is, of course, that the price of a barrel of oil rises as we get into summer consumption. But what we're seeing for an unprecedented occurrence is that we have hit a fresh 13-year high in the month . . . in the first week of May — a 13-year high. The barrel of oil is the highest it has ever been for 13 years.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to inform the member opposite that the Saskatchewan Party, the official opposition, as far back as a letter dated July 31, 2000, in the year 2000, a letter was sent by the now official opposition leader to the Minister of Finance indicating that there was a need to address the gouging of the taxpayer by taking in a huge amount of money in the GST. And this letter was sent in July, on July 31, 2000, by the member from Swift Current.

And the response, Mr. Speaker, is from the now Prime Minister of Canada, then the Hon. Paul Martin as minister of Finance. And I want to read into the record a couple of things that Mr. Martin responded to the member for Swift Current on August 22, 2000. And he says:

I would first like to clarify that provincial retail sales tax and many other provincial consumption taxes are excluded from the GST base.

While he's right in respect of many of the things that are purchased in the province of Saskatchewan, the fact is he should have added that fuel is not one of those that is exempted. And indeed the price of a barrel of oil and the price of a litre of gas includes GST. He goes on to say that:

You may be assured . . .

And I quote:

You may be assured that the federal government shares Canadians' concerns with the increases in the prices of petroleum products.

Mr. Speaker, that's a comment from the Finance minister in the year 2000. So no question, today's timing is just another spin of when the federal government is actually going to recognize the fact that consumers are being gouged by not only the high price that we see at the pumps, but by the fact that the federal government is receiving a huge amount of money.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things also that should be a common piece of information for all members is the projections of the WTI crude oil prices for the last number of months. Mr. Speaker, a chart that I have here clearly shows that the trend line from November of last year has been moving steadily up, and in fact the projections are that we're going to be well over the 40 barrel . . . \$40 per barrel price if this trend line continues. So, Mr. Speaker, the sudden emergence of a debate is something that we probably were foreseeing for a long period

of time now.

Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to note that in the province of Saskatchewan the member made reference to the fact that the province has changed a number of things. And in it the member stated that in changing some of the royalty structures, there was increased production in Saskatchewan.

I note from the document provided by the Minister of Finance that the production in the year 2002 was 153.6 million barrels of crude oil in the province of Saskatchewan. In 2003, the production level dropped to 151.6 million barrels of oil. Mr. Speaker, that's a drop of over 2 million barrels of oil. So that's a significant change.

Now I would hope that as businesses and the people involved in the oil and gas sector, as we've seen the price of a barrel of crude oil increase from the high 20s into the low 30s and now reaching \$40 a barrel, that we're going to see a dramatic change in production in Saskatchewan.

Now while this may be a benefit to the federal government and being able to absorb more GST because the price of a litre of fuel increases, what it also will mean is an increase of revenue for the province of Saskatchewan.

And I note, Mr. Speaker, that the minister in producing the documents that we are looking at currently under the budget debate, the price for a barrel of oil that was used in his estimates is \$26.50 per barrel. Now today's price is nearly \$40 a barrel. So I'm assuming that for the month of April at least, there will be record levels of revenue for the province of Saskatchewan.

Now the member opposite, the member from Prince Albert, made reference to a presentation made by the Minister of Finance in Ottawa, and he makes reference to a document produced by Professor Courchene regarding equalization and the dilemma that Saskatchewan faces.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, I have in my binder all of the information that was presented by Professor Courchene in his original paper, and also the information that he presented to the Standing Senate Committee on National Finance. I also have the material that was presented by the Minister of Finance. And as I indicated in this Assembly, I believe that the material that the Minister of Finance presented in his report to that committee was excellent, and it showed the position that Saskatchewan is facing regarding the unfair treatment by Saskatchewan in the equalization formula.

But very clearly the member made reference to the fact that if we somehow cancel the industry in Saskatchewan that we're going to, you know, save money because the federal government is gouging. That's not the position that the federal finance . . . that the provincial Finance minister took. In fact the provincial Finance minister's stated that the economy of the province relies on development. There are spin-off activities; there are spin-off industries in the province as a result of the oil and gas sector.

So there is no way that we want anyone in Ottawa to think that

it would be better for the province of Saskatchewan to somehow shut the oil and gas industry down. That's not what's on, Mr. Speaker. And I know that the Minister of Finance made that very clear. And I want to ensure that people who heard the previous comments from the member from Prince Albert don't suddenly believe that that government over there is somehow suggesting that the oil and gas sector should be shut down because that is, that is wrong.

Mr. Speaker, what is also true is that the Minister of Finance has indicated in his response to members in the Senate committee about how unfair this was for the province of Saskatchewan. And it's clear that the position that the federal government currently follows in its equalization formula is one of a five-province standard. And a five-province standard is shown by all of the statistics that you look at as being very unfair for the province of Saskatchewan. And we need to move to a 10-province standard. And there seems to have been some understanding with the federal government that that 10-province standard was going to be the basis for setting up a new federal agreement.

But what happened was — as is indicated by the Bill before the federal parliament today — is that that 10-province standard did not become part of the conditions being put forward.

So that is the position that the minister took and the official opposition has supported, that we need to look at number one, a ten-province standard; number two, some concerns about the mineral tax base; and thirdly, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance raised . . . in Ottawa he raised the concerns about the Crown lease agreement.

And the member opposite in his remarks indicated that, for the year that Professor Courchene identifies, there was a problem with the Crown lease agreement, that indeed the actual public auction of our Crown leases produce a specific revenue, and then Ottawa recognizes some, you know, absurd number that's totally out of whack. And the member's right by pointing out that that discrepancy in percentage was huge.

But what has also occurred . . . and the minister didn't indicate that, that the federal government and the Finance minister — the current Finance minister, Mr. Goodale — have recognized that problem. And the federal treasury has forwarded to the provincial treasury . . . and I know from asking a question of the Minister of Finance. A cheque has been received for 120 million to correct the inadequacies of a three-year situation that have been identified where the Crown lease agreements were in fact treating Saskatchewan unfairly. So we have \$120 million that we received.

I think the Minister of Finance is on record as also saying that the federal government has recognized that a public auction of our Crown leases is a much more accurate way of determining the value of Crown leases. I mean if you've sold your leases at a particular value by Crown . . . by public auction, what other values could you be using?

So the federal government has erred in its usage of inflated numbers, numbers that are not accurate, and they have corrected that for that three-year period. And I'm hopeful that the minister has made a point, through his officials as they continue their

negotiations in Ottawa, to achieve a much fairer equalization formula for Saskatchewan.

But that is only part of the problem. The equalization formula indicates a situation that the province of Saskatchewan, as our population declines . . . and there are a number of reasons. The province of Saskatchewan has one of the highest fuel tax per litre in all of Canada. We have a 15-cent-a-litre fuel tax. While it is a fixed number and doesn't change as the price of a litre of gasoline varies at the pumps, it is still a significant amount of money at 15 cents.

We know from the concerns expressed by the people in this province that costs, the costs of living in the province of Saskatchewan are high. Fuel prices are high. Property taxes are high. There's no relief from property taxes. We've just seen the changes to the farm fuel rebate program and reductions, and farmers are very concerned about the impact that this will have on their pocketbooks. And those are the concerns that need to be put forward.

Mr. Speaker, the other gist of this motion, of course, is to ask the federal government, as it achieves higher and higher levels of revenue from the increase in the gasoline price at the pumps and, Mr. Minister, we're . . . Mr. Speaker, we're not sure whether indeed we're going to see \$1 a litre in a very short while. That is apparently what is being speculated. This will achieve huge dollars of revenue at the federal treasury.

We ask and we support — and this is the part of the motion that I think that the official opposition has no part supporting — in that the tax that the federal government receives will be impacted, will be increased dramatically. And as a result, there needs to be some compensation for the province of Saskatchewan. Now whether that's addressed through immediate transfers or whether that's addressed through individual impact on citizens, we need more than the comment that the official opposition, the member for Swift Current, received in his letter from the Finance minister, Mr. Martin, back in July 2000, where he says that, you know, we recognize that Canadians have some concerns but basically so what?

What we need to see is a plan from the federal government that will look at, first of all, why is the price where it is today? Is it accurate? Is it fair? Or is there another way of ensuring that that price declines? Are there things like increased consumption, not only in North America but across the world? So there are various things that need to be looked at by the federal government.

And I know, Mr. Speaker, that the federal government is near calling a federal election, and that may be on the horizon. It may be in the next couple of weeks, so this doesn't leave a lot of time between now and when the parliament may dissolve. So, Mr. Speaker, it's critical that the Prime Minister and the Finance minister are made aware of the concerns. I think that the province of Saskatchewan has made the Finance minister, through lobbying, has made the Senate Committee on National Finance very aware of the inadequacies of the formula for equalization.

But there are other concerns that must be brought to the attention of officials in Ottawa. So, Mr. Speaker, the intent of

the motion is to ensure that Ottawa is made aware of the impact of a 7 per cent GST tax on tax, the fact that \$1.4 billion estimate is expected to be the revenue that will be generated, a minimum amount of revenue to be generated by fuel tax. Those kinds of things need to be addressed immediately, and therefore I would second the motion put forward by the member from Prince Albert.

**The Speaker:** — There being no further speakers, I will put the motion. The question before the Assembly is the one moved by the member for Prince Albert Northcote, seconded by the member for Canora-Pelly:

That this Assembly call upon the federal government to immediately call a meeting of provincial consumer affairs ministers to ensure consumers are not unfairly impacted by gasoline prices that create unfair windfalls, and that the federal government act to protect consumers in light of the massive revenues they will receive from the increased *ad valorem* tax regime.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, I move with leave:

That this Assembly request that Mr. Speaker send a copy of the transcript of the debate on the motion just passed to the Prime Minister of Canada and the federal Minister of Consumer Affairs.

And I would move that, seconded by the member for Melfort.

**The Speaker:** — By leave of the Assembly, moved by the member for Regina Douglas Park, seconded by the member for Melfort:

That this Assembly request that Mr. Speaker send a copy of the transcript of the debate on the motion just passed to the Prime Minister of Canada and the federal Minister of Consumer Affairs.

Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

**Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen:** — Mr. Speaker, to facilitate the proceedings of the Standing Committee on Human Services and the Standing Committee on Intergovernmental Affairs and Infrastructure, I move the Assembly do now adjourn.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that this Assembly do now adjourn. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m., and committee proceedings will resume.

The Assembly adjourned at 15:11.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

#### PRESENTING PETITIONS

Elhard .....	935
Wall .....	935
Draude .....	935
Stewart .....	935
Eagles .....	935
Bakken .....	935
Huyghebaert .....	936
Brkich .....	936
Weekes .....	936
Dearborn .....	936

#### READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk .....	936
--------------------	-----

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Brkich .....	936
Weekes .....	936

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Wall .....	937, 946
Wartman .....	937
Merriman .....	937
Calvert .....	937
Heppner .....	937
Toth .....	937

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

<b>D-Day Ceremonies</b>	
Heppner .....	937
<b>Emergency Preparedness Week</b>	
Iwanchuk .....	938
<b>Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centres' Reception</b>	
Morgan .....	938
<b>Northern Teacher Education Program</b>	
Beatty .....	938
<b>Beechy Ladies Royal Purple Curling Champs</b>	
Hermanson .....	939
<b>St. George Orthodox Cathedral Celebrates 90th Anniversary</b>	
Hamilton .....	939
<b>Habitat for Humanity</b>	
Merriman .....	939

#### ORAL QUESTIONS

<b>Funding for Repairs to Diefenbaker Bridge</b>	
Wall .....	940
Sonntag .....	940
Calvert .....	941
<b>Participation of Providers in Child Care Planning</b>	
Wall .....	941
Crofford .....	942
<b>Natural Gas Costs</b>	
Elhard .....	942
Van Mulligen .....	943
<b>Funding for Vaccine and Infectious Disease Organization</b>	
Cheveldayoff .....	943
Thomson .....	944

#### MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

<b>Immigrant Nominee Program</b>	
Atkinson .....	945
Weekes .....	946

#### ORDERS OF THE DAY

#### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Yates .....	947
The Speaker .....	947

**MOTION UNDER RULE 49**

**Protection for Consumers from Rising Gas Prices**

<b>Lautermilch</b> .....	947
<b>Krawetz</b> .....	950
<b>Van Mulligen</b> .....	952

## **CABINET MINISTERS**

Hon. L. Calvert  
Premier

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

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

Hon. B. Belanger  
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline  
Minister of Industry and Resources

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

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

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

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

Hon. P. Prebble  
Minister of Corrections and Public Safety

Hon. F. Quennell  
Minister of Justice and Attorney General

Hon. C. Serby  
Deputy Premier  
Minister of Rural Revitalization

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

Hon. L. Taylor  
Minister of Government Relations

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

Hon. H. Van Mulligen  
Minister of Finance

Hon. M. Wartman  
Minister of Agriculture and Food