



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

**Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan**

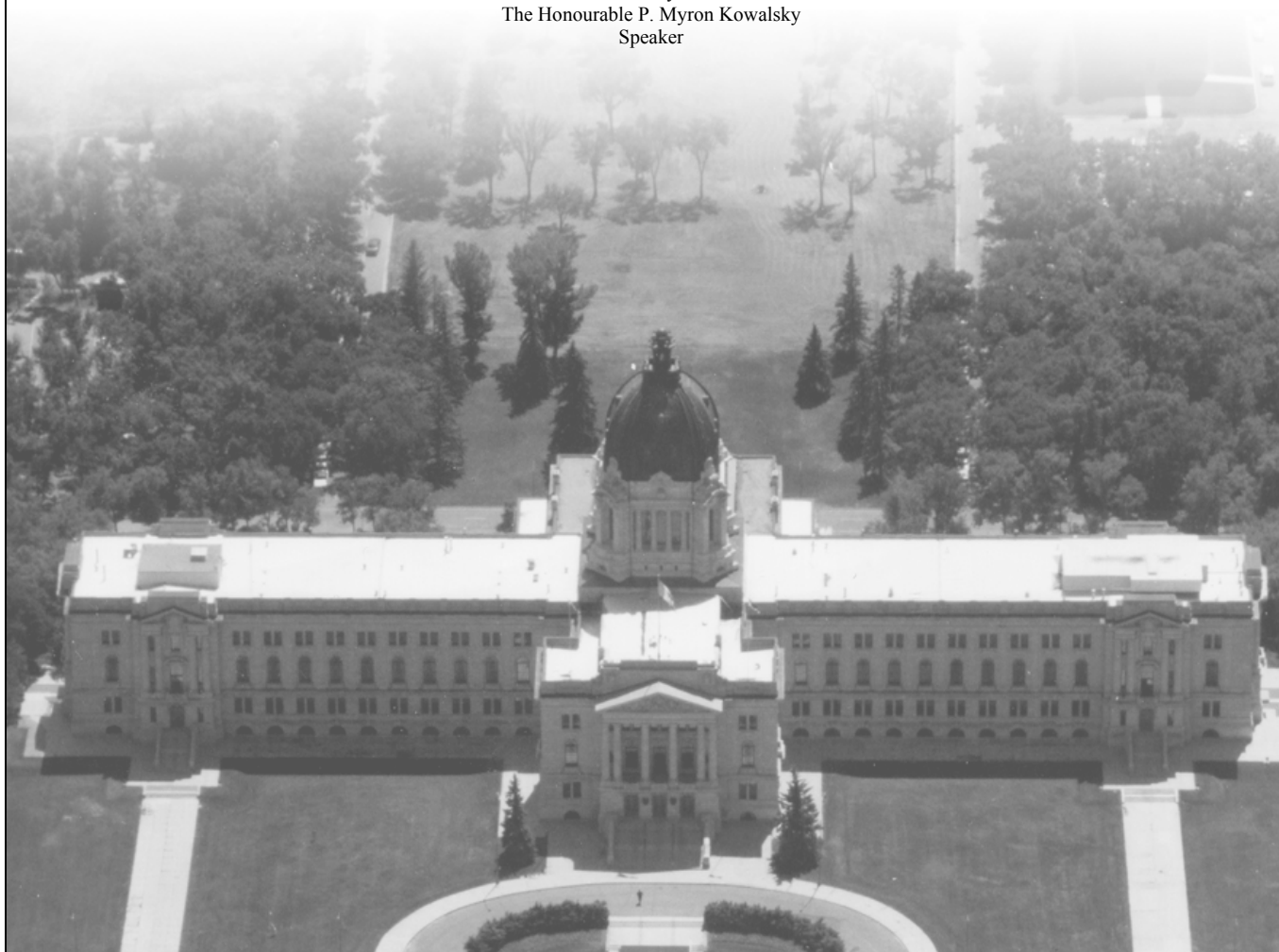
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**DEBATES  
and  
PROCEEDINGS**

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(HANSARD)

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



**MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN**

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

**PRESENTING PETITIONS**

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise on behalf of constituents of Cypress Hills once again to present a petition with concerns about the Crown land arrangements being made in the area. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions today are signed by residents of the communities of Maple Creek and Shaunavon.

I so present.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today on behalf of people from my constituency who are concerned about health care in our area.

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

Everyone that has signed this petition is from Wadena.

**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 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 Craik, Tugaske, and Penzance.

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 from constituents of mine who have concerns regarding health care as announced in this last spring budget. 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 Radville Marian 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 Lake Alma and Radville.

I so present. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I rise with a petition from citizens in my area that are extremely concerned about the potential closure of long-term care beds and health facilities throughout Saskatchewan, but specifically in my constituency. 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 in total by the good citizens of Lafleche.

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 a possible reduction of health care services in Wilkie. The prayer reads:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Wilkie Health Centre and the special care home 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 Wilkie, Unity, and Phippen, I so present.

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of concerned citizens from west central Saskatchewan worried about the loss of ambulance service. 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 Dodsland and Luseland ambulance services are not discontinued.

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

Mr. Speaker, these petitions are signed by the good folks from Kerrobert, Tramping Lake, Dodsland, Luseland, Smiley, and Salvador.

I so present.

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

**Ms. Bakken:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are concerned about health care services 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 the petition is signed by residents of Ceylon, Pangman, and Ogema.

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 Herbert-Morse Union Hospital;

Another petition concerning support for whistle-blower legislation;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 48, 50, 63, 106, 145, 157, 165, and 168.

#### NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Morgan:** — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 41 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: can the minister provide the number of judge positions that are currently vacant in each level of court, and how many judges in each level have gone supernumerary?

And the second question, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 41 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: can the minister provide the number of court files that were open in the Provincial Court, the Court of Queen's Bench, and the Court of Appeal respectively in each of the following calendar years: 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 41 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister Responsible for Saskatchewan Telecommunications: as of December 31, 2003, how many *Max* TV subscribers were: (1) not employees of SaskTel and received a discounted subscription rate for the *Max* TV service; (2) how much was the discount per subscriber; and (3) what qualification enabled the subscriber to receive a discount?

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

**Ms. Morin:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you, through you, and to all members of the Assembly, 51 Henry Janzen School students from grades 4 and 5. And they are constituents in Regina Walsh Acres and it pleases me that they're here today.

The teachers that are accompanying them are Verna Taylor and Shelley Desrosiers. They are also accompanied by a couple of chaperones, Mrs. Stewart and Mrs. Clark.

And we hope you enjoy your time here today and we thank you and welcome you to the Assembly.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Quennell:** — Mr. Minister, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the other members of the Assembly, Angie Chenier, who is a political science student at the University of Saskatchewan, has completed two years of her studies there, and is currently a summer student in our office.

I hope all members of the Assembly will welcome her to the Assembly this afternoon, and to the building.

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

#### STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

### Golden Sunset Seniors Club 20th Anniversary

**Ms. Hamilton:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Sunday, May 2 I had the pleasure of attending a celebration for the 20th anniversary of the Golden Sunset Seniors Club in Pilot Butte.

This club is made up of 44 members plus four lifetime members, including three who are over 90 years old and I'd say much more active some days than I might contemplate to be. They are Kathy Fry, Herb Partridge, and Vera Rodenbush.

Mr. Speaker, the seniors' centre is a place where club members can meet friends and take part in various activities. It's a place where members enjoy competing at board and card games. Crib tournaments are a particular favourite.

The centre also hosts representatives from the Health department and educational speakers who give presentations on issues related to seniors.

On the first Tuesday of every month, members of the community are invited to the centre for soup and sandwich luncheons, and every Tuesday and Thursday morning the club meets for exercises.

Mr. Speaker, most major events in Pilot Butte have had strong participation from the club's members and many are involved preparing the meals, scheduling the speakers, and in hosting some of these activities. They have also had the opportunity to host our Premier and have warmly welcomed me on many occasions.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the president of the club, Helen Hubick, vice-president, Nesta Ellis, secretary, Penny Thibeault, and treasurer, Marian Zsombor, for inviting me to participate in their celebration.

I'm sure all my colleagues will join me in congratulating the Golden Sunset Seniors Club of Pilot Butte on their 20th anniversary.

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

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

### New Business in Kindersley

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure today to congratulate a fairly new business in Kindersley, the T. Co. Chocolate Factory, owned and operated by Terri Copeland.

Following a trip to Costa Rica last year, Terri came back home with a love for the Costa Rican coffee. It gave her the inspiration she needed to start this business, using Costa Rican coffee beans to make her special chocolates which she calls coffee critters — a taste in nature.

Fellow chocolatier, Gladys McCarthy, owner of Glad's Chocolates, gave Terri the encouragement she needed to start her business, lending her equipment as well as expertise to start her new venture.

Terri's business was inspired by her trip to Costa Rica and she

carries that into her company. Her company, named T. Co. Chocolate Factory, was named so after the endearing name that she often heard the Costa Rican people call each other. As well, she packages the chocolate using the vibrant colours that are so prominent in that country.

Please join me in congratulating this new business owner on her entrepreneurial venture that has brought an imaginative new business to the province. To hear of these new ideas and fellow business people who are so willing to help each other, it gives us a bright hope for Saskatchewan's future.

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

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

### National Fair Trade Weeks

**Mr. Borgerson:** — Mr. Speaker, May 1 to 15 is National Fair Trade Weeks, and this year's theme is Small Change, Big Difference.

Mr. Speaker, buying fair trade products truly is a small effort that can make a big difference in the lives of farmers and workers around the world. National Fair Trade Weeks is an opportunity to learn more about the issue, to taste and purchase fair trade products, and to hear the good stories from those who benefit from fair trade.

Mr. Speaker, fair trade products guarantee to consumers that the producers have received a fair price for their products. By choosing to buy fair trade certified products, each one of us can have a positive and direct impact on the lives of farmers and workers in developing countries.

Mr. Speaker, fair trade certified coffee is the most widely sold product in the movement, but there are several other products available through fair trade such as tea, cocoa, sugar, cosmetics, and fresh fruits.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, May 15 from 11 till 1 Oxfam Canada will hold a fair trade event at the Civic Square near city hall in Saskatoon. This event will honour labour, internationally and at home, and will feature guest speaker Yann Martel, the author of the best-selling novel, *Life of Pi*.

Mr. Speaker, I invite everyone to purchase a fair trade product during National Fair Trade Weeks and throughout the year. And I thank everyone involved in the movement, including the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, Oxfam, and the local stores and shops in our province that sell fair trade products. Thank you.

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

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

### Rosetown Students Compete in Skills Canada Competition

**Mr. Hermanson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to Rosetown Central High School grade 12 students, Brett Gray,

Will Crossman, Larry Kadler, and grade 11 student, David Cressman, who competed against other Saskatchewan students in the Skills Canada provincial competition, which was recently held in Prince Albert. Skills Canada is a competition where each competing student is given a set amount of material, a plan, and six hours to complete a project. They are not allowed to communicate with teachers or other students during this time. The three categories that these four boys entered were autobody, cabinet making, and welding.

Placing first was grade 12 student, Will Crossman in cabinet making. Will now advances to the national competition held in Winnipeg, Manitoba on May 26 to 31, representing Saskatchewan, where he will compete against students from across Canada. Accompanying him is his industrial arts teacher, Ken Downs, and his parents, Shellie and Jim Crossman, all of Rosetown. Will Crossman's event in Winnipeg lasts for twelve hours over two days. If Will wins his event, he will advance to the world finals being held in Finland. Good luck, Will.

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

(13:45)

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

#### 47th Annual Spring School

**Ms. Morin:** — Mr. Speaker, last week more than 200 people took part in the 47th annual Spring School co-sponsored by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour and the Canadian Labour Congress.

This week-long school provides workers with the confidence, skills, and knowledge to protect themselves and others while on the job. It's an opportunity to learn about the history of the labour movement, how to become a shop steward, how to bargain, and much, much more.

One of the more popular courses focuses on labour laws including occupational health and safety laws. Another course teaches participants how to become a facilitator in order to carry on the tradition of workers mentoring workers.

Mr. Speaker, Spring School is not only a week of learning, it's also a time to relax in a comfortable environment. Participants are encouraged to bring their children to the school where on-site child care is provided. They're invited to go for early morning hikes or jogs and to take part in a variety of other activities.

Mr. Speaker, the SFL (Saskatchewan Federation of Labour)/CLC (Canadian Labour Congress) Spring School is an opportunity to meet new friends, to share your experiences with others, and to learn from your peers. As someone who has attended this school, I can say from first-hand experience that the atmosphere is welcoming, the education is worthwhile, and the week is one of motivation and inspiration.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure my colleagues will join me in acknowledging the SFL and the CLC for their time and effort in hosting 47 years of Spring School and for their commitment to

Saskatchewan workers. Congratulations to this year's participants.

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

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

#### Martensville Constituency

**Mr. Heppner:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity today to go ahead and recognize my constituency of Martensville in a more general way than some of the specifics that we so often do.

There have been a lot of positive things happening in my constituency and in deference to all of my colleagues, they usually get the time in members' statements rather than I. So I'd like to summarize some of the things that have been happening there in recent times.

We've had two arenas built; we've had a school addition built; there are two school additions happening this summer. We've had a fire hall built. Warman community and Warman school have gone together to do a joint project. There's new businesses, Mr. Speaker, in Hague, Osler, Warman, and Martensville. There's value-added industries happening throughout the whole thing.

All of this, Mr. Speaker, in the middle of the NDP influence and their refusal, Mr. Speaker . . .

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

**Mr. Heppner:** — . . . in the middle of this influence and the NDP refusal, Mr. Speaker, to provide high-speed Internet, needed twinings, left-hand turning lanes, a lot less red tape in rural Saskatchewan.

Just think, Mr. Speaker, what this province could be in total if there were no NDP (New Democratic Party) around anywhere.

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

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

#### Climate Change Show Opens at Science Centre

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to share with this Assembly today another example of SaskPower's efforts to help our young people understand the impact that electrical generation has on our environment, and what each of us can do to help, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday a new travelling exhibit, The Climate Change Show, opened at the Saskatchewan Science Centre. Mr. Speaker, SaskPower's efforts for educational programs like this exhibit is important if we are to engage young people, the future leaders of our province, thinking about solutions to a challenge that affects us all.

Equally important, this project complements our government's commitment to develop made-in-Saskatchewan solutions that address climate change and create a green and prosperous

province, Mr. Speaker.

Exhibits supporting the multimedia theatre are organized into three themes: understanding the science, impacts of a changing environment, and living in a changing world, Mr. Speaker. The multimedia theatre will be at the Science Centre until June 13. The remainder of the travelling exhibit will stay at the Science Centre until September 6, Mr. Speaker.

I encourage all members to make a . . . to take a short walk from this building over to the Science Centre to learn more about this important issue, and I invite all my colleagues to join me in acknowledging SaskPower and the Science Centre for creating awareness about climate change among our young people in Saskatchewan.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### ORAL QUESTIONS

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

#### Payment Made Regarding Harassment Case

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Mr. Speaker, last Thursday this Premier quietly approved a payment of \$135,000 to nine women who were allegedly harassed by Murdoch Carriere when he worked for the Department of the Environment. Will the Premier please tell this Assembly what is the purpose of this payment?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the minister for the PSC (Public Service Commission).

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can confirm to the member is that a payment has been made to nine individuals. I can also advise the member that I cannot comment any further on the matter as there are a number of outstanding legal issues still before the courts.

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

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. \$135,000 works out to about \$15,000 per woman. Does this settle liability with all the women who were victims of harassment, or are there more victims involved? And is there further compensation being considered for these victims?

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

**Hon. Ms. Atkinson:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I can confirm for the member is that a payment of \$135,000 has been made to the lawyer representing nine individuals. I can advise that I cannot comment further on this matter as there are a number of outstanding issues still before the courts.

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

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

#### Funding for Nursing Program Seats

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On July 31, 2003, the NDP government announced a commitment to expand nursing education seats in Saskatchewan. The commitment was clear — 100 more spaces over three years. The commitment was also specific according to the news release, and I quote:

. . . first year enrolment will increase by 25 seats in the 2003/04 academic year, followed by 40 seats in 2004, and another 35 in 2005.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Learning, how many of the 25 new nursing students have completed their first year of studies?

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, we had some opportunity last night in estimates to deal with details around this. I did confirm what the government's approach was and a plan, and I can confirm that the funding is available as the enrolment is there. This government is committed to paying for seats, full seats, in the nursing program. That's the commitment we made, and that is what we will keep.

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, that answer is interesting — a little confusing, but interesting. The NDP government made a clear commitment to increase first year enrolment by 25 last fall. Last night in estimates the Minister of Learning said, and I quote:

The program is on track and we're pleased to announce that . . .

Seats are going to be added incrementally over three years with an increase of 25 seats that occurred in . . . (2003-2004), an additional 40 seats in . . . (2004-2005), and . . . (30) seats in . . . (2005-2006).

Mr. Speaker, depending on which minister you ask, you get a different answer on this issue. Yesterday afternoon during estimates, the Minister of Health said this commitment will not start until this fall. According to him the plan will start with 32 seats this fall. Which minister should we believe, Mr. Speaker?

Not knowing who to believe, we followed up with the dean of nursing this morning at SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) who confirmed that funding is in place for 32 seats this fall and that the 25 seats from last fall never happened. Why does the Minister of Learning not know what's happening in his department?

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I have . . . I think it is important here that we understand a couple of different things. First of all, the Minister of Health and I are in fact saying the same thing, and the member should read *Hansard* last night and he'll see that to be the case.

Second of all, the member should also understand that nursing education occurs not only at the University of Saskatchewan, but there are in fact seats in Regina. I think if the member understands that, he'll have a better understanding as to how this program works. And this would certainly have been a useful conversation that we could have extended last night when the officials were here so that we could certainly make sure that that member was up to speed on this program.

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

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

**Mr. Cheveldayoff:** — I think if the minister looks into it a little further, he'll understand that I'm certainly up to speed on this issue.

Yesterday the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) reported the U of S (University of Saskatchewan) hasn't received any money to fund new seats. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the U of S is confused over whether the NDP will even keep their promise to fund the entire hundred nurses. President MacKinnon is concerned the NDP have made a decision, and I quote, ". . . not to increase the numbers of nursing students in the same way that it thought it would take place last year."

It's no wonder the University of Saskatchewan is leery about this commitment. The Minister of Learning needs to get his story straight here or at least consult with the Minister of Health. Mr. Speaker, why did the NDP government promise 25 new nursing seats last fall, not to follow through with that promise and then have the Learning minister tell the Committee of Finance that those 25 seats were created?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Thomson:** — Mr. Speaker, I have made this clear to this Assembly in the past, and I will make it clear again that we are going to pay for the seats as they are filled. We are not paying for vacant seats.

This is not money that is being put into the university budgets not to be used for this. The money will go strictly into new seats as those seats are filled, and that is what we're committed to. We are committed to creating a hundred new seats — filled seats — within the three years. That's a commitment the Minister of Health and I are in agreement of and a commitment on which there is no disagreement in terms of with the university.

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

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

### African-Based Internet Scam

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, yesterday officials from SaskTel admitted that about 700 of their customers have been victims of an African-based Internet scam — 700 victims, Mr. Speaker. And the NDP didn't see fit to warn anybody about this until the Saskatchewan Party brought it up in the legislature yesterday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, law enforcement agencies and consumer protection groups routinely warn the public about phone scams, investment scams, and other fraudulent activity. Why didn't the NDP warn the public about this African-based Internet scam until 700 people were victimized?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, let me say on this issue I think it's important that the opposition does raise this issue because it's important and unfortunate when many of our customers — whether they're, in fact, customers of SaskTel or customers period — are scammed like this. And I want to thank the member, and I want to thank the media in fact for making the public aware of this very important issue.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, in the line of questioning yesterday, I think the member was asking specifically about this scam out of Africa, Mr. Speaker. This scam in fact has existed for some number of years. And I myself just looked in . . . researched some of the old phone bills, and as a warning in '02 to every single customer in Saskatchewan . . . in '03 there's a similar warning as well, and we provide information on the SaskTel Internet site, on the Web site I should say, for customers to be cautious of scams like this, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, it really does make you wonder how much longer the NDP was willing to wait on this particular issue; how many more people might have been scammed if we hadn't raised it in the legislature yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, credit card companies have procedures in place to protect their clients from being ripped off. For example, many credit card companies will phone their customers if they see a large number of unusual purchases suddenly appearing on a credit card bill. Wouldn't it make sense, Mr. Speaker, for SaskTel to do the same thing, instead of waiting for the phone bill to show up with hundreds of dollars of bogus charges?

Mr. Speaker, why wouldn't SaskTel develop a similar policy of contacting their customers, if all of a sudden long-distance charges to places like Madagascar or the Cook Islands or São Tomé start showing up on their phone bill?

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



**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well I'm going to read directly out of the July '03 bulletin to every SaskTel customer in the province. It says, and I quote, Mr. Speaker, it says:

Internet users should also be cautious of proprietary viewers or dialers for web content on the internet. Certain web sites may indicate that you need a special viewer to view their content or a special dialer to contact their servers to allow you to download data or view their content.

And listen to this; it says:

Use of such a proprietary "viewer" may cause exorbitant phone costs to the unsuspecting dial-up or high speed internet user. Customers must use caution when encountering any site that indicates that you require software from them to view their content.

Now having said that, Mr. Speaker, SaskTel is of course very, very concerned when any of its customers are adversely affected by a scam like this. And we will work — as had been indicated yesterday — with our customer base to ensure that they are protected into the future. And we've said that we would provide a 50 per cent subsidy on this particular scam, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, in light of the view that SaskTel is a purveyor of state-of-the-art technology, in view of the fact that SaskTel has an ability to contact their customers on short notice — and I assume would have the technology available to read SaskTel phone bills prior to the accumulation of large amounts of out-of-country calls — maybe they could use that technology to better purposes and contact the customers who are being abused by these types of Internet scams?

(14:00)

Other companies do it. Credit card companies do it. In fact if you have bank fraud going on, you can know within 24 hours whether your account has been accessed by some fraudulent purpose or not. Mr. Speaker, it's not out of the realm of possibility that SaskTel could and ought to have that kind of capability.

And in light of the fact that the NDP allowed 700 customers to get ripped off by this latest scam before they said a word directly to the customers, will the government waive all the long-distance charges that have been incurred to date? Mr. Speaker, according to SaskTel, that would amount to \$40,000. I don't think that's an amount of money that will break the company. Will they undertake to waive all those long-distance charges that have been incurred to date as a result of this scam?

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Sonntag:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well first of all, I have been advised that what the member just said with respect to SaskTel should have known in advance, Mr. Speaker, is not the case. And nor is it the case for any telephone company, as I understand it, worldwide. They can only determine that there has been a fraud like this probably a number of weeks or months after the case, when the customers start to get their phone bills. And I am advised that no other phone company has that mechanism within their system to block calls in advance.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's important to note because this is really an important subject and it really is. And again I thank the member for raising the question. But look it started, you know, hundreds of years ago with snake oil salesmen. It moved to scams through the mail system, Mr. Speaker; it moved to scams with telemarketers. Now with information technology, it has moved to scams like this over the Internet. It has moved through . . . I suspect there will be scams in the future with new technology evolving. The important thing is, Mr. Speaker, is that SaskTel and other companies, Mr. Speaker, will work to protect their customers.

Mr. Speaker, and I do want to provide for the Assembly as well one last piece of information. And that is the majority of these scams originate first of all by people downloading off of pornographic sites. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it results as people downloading off of a horoscope site and very often through video gambling sites. Those would be just some of the examples of where people would be hooked into some of these scams as well, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

### Centennial Student Employment Program

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation, the member for Cumberland is responsible for the centennial student employment program. Yesterday I tried to pry the minister from her seat to answer questions about this program, but she decided to follow the lead of the Premier in this session by hiding under her desk instead.

So let's try again. Mr. Speaker. Last year the centennial student employment program provided \$156,000 to Saskatchewan's . . .

**The Speaker:** — Order please. Order. Order, please. Would the member proceed?

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year the centennial student employment program provided \$156,000 to Saskatchewan's regional parks. In turn, the regional parks created 70 summer jobs for students. And this year the NDP axed the regional parks' funding and killed at least 70 jobs for students this summer. Why?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation.

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

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to stand here on this side of the House to respond to the member from Kindersley. We are very proud of what we are doing for the young people of this province. And one of the most successful programs we have is the centennial student employment program. And the purpose of that program is to provide good, meaningful career opportunities for young people of this province, and we are committed to continuing to do that. This year we're going to provide 600 student jobs to young people all over the province.

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

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, thanks to the minister of youth's decision to axe student employment funding to regional parks, at least 70 young people will not get a summer job this year. And yesterday the minister refused to answer questions in the legislature, and she was incapable of answering simple questions from the media after question period.

Twenty-four hours later the NDP's youth minister still can't explain why her own department is killing summer jobs for young people. Mr. Speaker, it's a straightforward question, and the young people who the NDP fired deserve an answer. Why is the NDP's minister responsible for youth abandoning young people by axing regional park funding for youth employment this summer?

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister for Culture, Youth, and Recreation.

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Mr. Speaker, like I said earlier, we are committed to listening to young people of this province. And one of the recommendations that they made to us was to make changes to the area of urban and regional park jobs because they wanted meaningful jobs that would allow them to pick career, make it easier for them to make career choices. They wanted meaningful jobs, and that's what we have done.

And so we're not only listening to the young people of this province; we're continuing to involve them in all areas of government. On this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we have a holistic plan, and we are working with young people from the early child to . . . all the way to post-secondary and meaningful employment.

On this side of the House, like I said, we have a holistic plan. What is your plan? You know all I heard during the campaign was boot camps.

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

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

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Mr. Speaker, it's precisely the plan that is the problem, Mr. Speaker. It's precisely the 70 people, 70 young men and women that will not have jobs this summer that is the responsibility of that ministry. That's the problem, Mr. Speaker; it is that plan.

That's the problem, Mr. Speaker, when they say one thing —

the youth are our future — and then they go ahead and cut 70 jobs. The minister has yet to answer the question.

She says there is 600 students employed; that's wonderful. Where are they being replaced? Holistic or not, there's 70 fewer jobs. There's 70 fewer students are going to be employed this summer. How can the students of this province and young people trust the NDP when her department has gone forth and cut jobs?

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

**The Speaker:** — I recognize the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation.

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — Like I said earlier, the centennial student employment program will provide 600 good jobs to young people.

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

**Hon. Ms. Beatty:** — The past three years it has provided 3,600 jobs to over 100 communities from throughout the province. And we are committed to delivering those kinds of jobs this year.

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

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

#### **Firefighter Staffing for Forest Fire Season**

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Environment minister made a very curious statement. He said, and I quote, "We have not cut back in people working on the forest fires." Mr. Speaker, according to people in northern Saskatchewan that I've spoken with, the NDP government's new policy of letting forest fires burn will mean a lot fewer seasonal workers hired to fight forest fires.

Mr. Speaker, the NDP has said it is downsizing ground firefighting capacity. It's closing some fire bases in the North. How can the minister say that no jobs will be lost fighting forest fires?

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

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to say that our forest fire suppression plan is in place, and it's working well. We're actually experiencing fewer fires than in previous years. And I mean a large part of that . . .

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

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

**The Speaker:** — Minister of the Environment.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — And in fact, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say that today there are five forest fires burning in this province, and to date there's been 38 fires burning. Last year up to this date was 68 and the 10-year average is 88.

So I think it's a good day for firefighting in Saskatchewan. You know, the people who do a great job up north fighting fires, I think deserve a lot of recognition, and I think they're doing a good job. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is laughable — the NDP trying to take credit for less forest fires when they cut people from fighting forest fires. And yet they want to take credit because there's less. Maybe the wet weather has something to do with it.

Mr. Speaker, on budget day the minister said the NDP plan is, quote, "... to allow fire to play a more natural role in the forest." He also said the government will be downsizing its ground firefighting capacity. That clearly means fewer jobs in the North — fewer jobs in the North — and fewer seasonal people hired to fight forest fires.

How on earth can the minister claim that the NDP has not cut back people fighting forest fires when it's clear by all the cuts that there are less people fighting forest fires?

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

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — You know, Mr. Speaker, I really enjoy the one-liners that come over from the other side. It shows the depth of the understanding of the issue up north.

We have a \$65 million budget fighting forest fires up north. This is a serious commitment to the people, the communities, the industry up north and we really mean business when we come to fighting forest fires.

They think it's a joke. They laugh about this. This is not funny. This is not funny at all. Those people over there, the critic for Environment thinks it's an opportunity to make light of a situation in the North.

I think this is very serious, Mr. Speaker. The people who were working up there last year are working again this year. This is very important, and I don't think this is a laughing matter.

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

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, it's definitely not a laughing matter for the people that lost their jobs, and the minister still hasn't answered how many people have lost their jobs. We'll find out later today in estimates.

And talk about depth of understanding, I don't think there's any depth of understanding on that side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the people of Buffalo Narrows want a public meeting with the Environment minister and the Minister of Northern Affairs. In fact there was a public meeting scheduled last night, but it had to be cancelled because the ministers said they had to stay in the legislature. Now the

Minister of Northern Affairs is saying he can't possibly attend a public meeting in the North until some time in August.

Mr. Speaker, the next time the people of the North plan a public meeting, the Saskatchewan Party is prepared to send as many MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) with the NDP as it wants to send. They should load up the Environment minister, the Culture minister, the Minister of Northern Affairs, all get on a plane and head to the North. And the Saskatchewan Party will be there with them to attend these meetings, and we'll go to those meetings. Mr. Speaker, why is the Minister of Northern Affairs afraid to meet with his own constituents?

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

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, we had work in the House. And again I think this is very serious; this is what we were all elected to do, is to be here. The people up north, we were meeting primarily with Environment staff, and they understand the situation. Just like if there was a fire up north, they would be fighting it. I wouldn't expect them to wait for me in that case.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think this is a very important issue. I've gone up to La Ronge. I've gone up to P.A. (Prince Albert). I've spoken to the media several times up there about this issue, so we clearly understand the issue. We understand the new policy about fighting forest fires. This is happening right across North America, in BC (British Columbia) — right across North America, as I've said.

This is an important issue, and I'm really kind of shocked that the critic over there on the other side wouldn't take more time to understand this and not take the opportunity to grandstand when this is a very serious issue dealing with people's lives.

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

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

#### Protection of the Environment and Natural Resources

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. I didn't plan to be up here twice, but if you just indulge me a moment I wanted to respond to a question I was asked on Friday regarding winterkill on Cowan Lake. And as promised, I discussed this with my staff, and I'm pleased to report back here this afternoon.

Cowan Lake is known to be susceptible to winterkill, a natural phenomenon. It's suffered spring fish kill in the past. This past winter was long, and the area had good snow cover which served to increase the chance of winterkill. My department did receive some reports of this limited fish kill on Cowan this spring but nothing particularly severe or which would warrant concern for the lake's fish population. Nonetheless I've asked my staff to keep me updated on developments on this lake. Thank you very much.

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

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

### Firefighter Staffing for Forest Fire Season

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Speaker, on my previous question it's kind of interesting to hear the minister try and rant and say how important it is and yet at the same time they're refusing cutting jobs in the North, and at the same time they're refusing to attend public meetings. Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding there's another public meeting scheduled this evening in Cumberland in the Minister of Youth, Culture and Recreation's constituency. Will the NDP be sending anybody to the meeting in Cumberland this evening?

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

(14:15)

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

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — What I'd like to say, Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate for sure that the minister . . . or that our department, the ministry, for sure has made a commitment to the North — that no jobs have been lost in the initial attack crews, the people who actually fight the fires.

There have been job losses in the department. We still have 1,500 people across this province, 40 offices, protecting the environment. The initial attack crews up north, where the action is, they're in place. They're fighting fires. And we're just thankful that the situation today says that there's not much fire to be fighting. Thank you.

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

### TABLING OF DOCUMENTS

**The Speaker:** — Members, before orders of the day . . . Order, please. I would like to table this New Democratic Party caucus end-of-term financial statement schedule of fixed assets and auditor's opinion statements received from the government caucus office in accordance with directive 23.

### ORDERS OF THE DAY

### WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

**Mr. Yates:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 275 through 277 inclusive.

**The Speaker:** — Responses for 275, 276, and 277 have been received.

### SECOND READINGS

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

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

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

today to move second reading of Bill No. 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004.

As many members will know, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Act establishes a key element of the provincial financial assistance for urban and rural municipalities. These amendments will give legal effect to decisions announced in the 2004-2005 budget. The Bill establishes the amounts of the funds available this year to both the urban revenue-sharing pool and the rural revenue-sharing pool.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that the Bill provides for an increase this year for urban revenue sharing of 7.395 million and an increase for rural revenue sharing of 1.605 million. This, together with funding for northern municipalities, represents an increase of \$10 million to municipalities from last year — an election commitment, Mr. Speaker, kept.

Mr. Speaker, this means that over the last three years our government has increased total municipal revenue sharing by \$30 million. With the third \$10 million increase being provided in 2004-2005, revenue-sharing funding for urban, rural, and northern municipalities will have increased by 54 per cent over the past three years. Our government has committed to increase revenue sharing as resources permit to ensure stable, sustainable, long-term funding for municipalities.

This Bill and the budget decision it enacts are proof positive of our commitment to municipal governments across this province, Mr. Speaker. This increase means an additional 5.357 million in unconditional funding for cities. For towns, villages, and resort villages, the increase is 2.038 million; and for rural municipalities, Mr. Speaker, the increase is 1.605 million.

The distribution restores the relationship between the urban and rural pools to 56.5 per cent urban and 43.5 per cent rural, as was the case in 1997-98. In the year following that '97-98, Mr. Speaker, there was a \$3 million increase to rural revenue sharing and no corresponding increase to urban revenue sharing. This Bill will restore the relationship between the urban and rural pools that existed prior to that increase. I note, Mr. Speaker, that the rural revenue-sharing imbalance remained in place for a full five fiscal years through to this year's budget.

My officials have consulted with the Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association, the cities within the province, and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities on how to distribute the funds this year. Their views have been considered.

Mr. Speaker, individual rural municipalities will receive unconditional revenue-sharing grants as determined by a formula that includes both a transportation and a service component. This formula is based 85 per cent on the road system in each rural municipality, while the remaining 15 per cent is based on a three-year rolling average as expenditures such as protective services or culture and recreation services. This formula was developed and implemented in consultation with SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) last year.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the formula will provide a degree of equalization for municipalities with different fiscal capacities as

costs will be adjusted based on taxable assessment of each RM (rural municipality) and on the varying costs of providing services.

As well, Mr. Speaker, 2.25 million of the rural revenue-sharing funding will be conditional for the construction of heavy-haul roads. This responds to concerns from RMs, particularly in the Lloydminster area, about needing more provincial funding for roads used by the heavy oil industry.

Mr. Speaker, the amount that each city and urban municipality will receive as its unconditional revenue-sharing grant will be established by regulation and in consultation with the municipalities. Amendments to the Act will be retroactive to April 1, 2004.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this incremental funding of \$10 million increases the total amount of funding distributed through the revenue-sharing program to more than 78 million for Saskatchewan rural and urban municipalities.

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Mr. Speaker, this funding is critical to the prosperity and well-being of all communities and municipalities in Saskatchewan and I urge all members to support the Bill. Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of Bill 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 44, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Moosomin.

**Mr. Toth:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments regarding the proposed legislation that is before the Assembly, The Municipal Revenue Sharing Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that the municipal governments across this province have been looking for some relief in the off-load that this government over the past numbers of years has actually laid on municipal governments, an off-load which has caused the municipalities to face — whether they be urban, large urban, or small urban or rural municipalities — to face significant difficulties as they address the services that they would provide their tax owners and their taxpayers, Mr. Speaker.

So this announcement today in some ways is nothing new; it's just an attempt by government to try and play catch-up in regards to what the government over the years has taken away from municipal governments.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, when you look back over the last 12 years, you look at what's been taken away, and you look at where governments would be today had the funding been in place, had the agreements been honoured through the years, the \$10 million that is being offered today, we find, Mr. Speaker, is

going to be very . . . municipal governments are going to find it very difficult to do the catch-up that they need to address the infrastructure problems that they continue to face in lieu of continued moves and the off-load that this government continues to place on municipal governments.

Mr. Speaker, when I talk about off-load, let's look rural municipalities, for example. And we see in many cases around this province, as a result of the deterioration of the highway network, municipal governments have had to absorb heavy-haul traffic onto their grid road system in order for the government to at least have some resemblance of a dust-free surface highway system network that would at least allow commercial — or not commercial, but private customers and operators — the opportunity to have fairly reasonable highway dust-free surfaces to travel on.

The off-load however, and movement onto the rural infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, has meant that these municipalities need more funds than they originally anticipated just to maintain their grid road structure so that their taxpayers and the — whether it's the oil sector or the commercial traffic that is on it — can have the ability to travel fairly safely down this grid road system.

And I believe the minister did make a comment about the fund's recognition of the additional funds that are needed to address the concerns of the off-load onto the rural infrastructure program and addressing the grid road system because of the off-load of the heavy-haul traffic onto rural municipalities.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I believe most municipal governments, as they look back and as they begin to receive these funds, are going to be looking at whether or not the funds will allow them the ability to do the catch-up they need as they begin to address their needs of addressing their water quality, addressing the water services they have in their communities, be they the large urbans or the smaller urbans, as they begin to look at their infrastructure such as street upgrading and rural roads, and certainly, Mr. Speaker, as we look at highways as well and how we promote the province of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, over the past number of years we've talked about, and this government has talked about, tourism in the province of Saskatchewan. They've talked about the importance of tourism.

We talk about the qualities of life we have in this province and the numerous venues that are available that we should be promoting to people outside of the province of Saskatchewan, as this is a place where people should be able to look forward to coming to visit. And whether they enjoy fishing, whether they enjoy hunting, although that is becoming more difficult as a result of legislation and laws — in many cases laws that this government has no control over — and however, Mr. Speaker, even just to enjoy camping in the province of Saskatchewan.

And when I talk about the opportunity of promoting tourism, one of the things we need in the province of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, is we need access through a high-quality road network and more specifically dust-free highway network that allows people to move through the province to their destination.

And I just want to bring to the House's attention just a comment from, most recently, a couple from the States that had come up and finally stopped a highway traffic worker and asked them, which is the quickest way for us to get back to the States? Because we came up with the intention of going into northern Saskatchewan, but the highways we've had to travel on thus far — and namely 47 Highway and north, Mr. Speaker — they've just worn us out. We're not prepared to go any further. We never did get to the destination we wanted to travel through. What is the best road or best highway network so we can get back home and at least try to relax a little bit before we have to go back to work?

And, Mr. Speaker, that doesn't speak well of our province as we try to promote tourism in the province of Saskatchewan.

So as we look at the revenue sharing, the revenue sharing is necessary. Municipalities, municipal governments for the past number of years have had to absorb a significant downsizing. They've had to absorb significant off-loading. They've had to put off projects.

We trust, Mr. Speaker, that this revenue sharing that has been announced, announcement of \$10 million will be a move in the right direction that indeed allows municipal governments to begin to address some of the major concerns. However, as we understand, this is a drop in the bucket. It's going to take a lot more than this to do the catch-up that is needed as it's been off-loaded over the past number of years.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, we all know when it comes to rural municipalities . . . And we had leaders from our rural municipalities, from SARM in this Assembly, I believe it was a couple of weeks ago, because of the concern that they face, continue to face and are facing today, in regards to the high cost of education that is being borne by the property tax payer in the province of Saskatchewan.

(14:30)

So whether or not this announcement today will allow municipalities to be able to address that concern with their property owners is a good question. My guess is that the announcement of funding to rural municipalities today really will not have any impact on the educational portion of property. Municipal governments may be able to, Mr. Speaker, address just the property, the municipal property tax level. However, the property owner is still being left with a high cost and bearing a high burden of the education property tax when they go to pay their taxes.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of issues that, despite the increase that's been announced, there are a number of issues that continue to be brought forward that no doubt even members opposite, the government members are aware, concerns that continue to be raised, that need to be addressed. And, Mr. Speaker, I would move therefore at this time that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member from Moosomin that the debate on second reading of Bill No. 44 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004.

The Planning and Development Act, 1983 establishes the framework for land use planning and subdivision in the province. Mr. Speaker, the amendments proposed in this Bill will streamline the surface lease registration process for the oil and gas industry — specifically the amendments will exempt surface leases for well sites, batteries, compressors and related equipment, roadways, pipelines, and power lines from subdivision approval.

Historically subdivision approval has been required for the registration of a lease where the lease affects only a portion of a parcel of land. Leases with a term less than 10 years are currently exempted by the planning Act. However, oil and gas leases typically have a term of 21 years. Oil and gas companies have been obtaining surface rights for the drilling, producing, and recovering of oil or natural gas by registering a surface lease against an entire parcel or quarter section. Registering the lease on the entire parcel has avoided the need to obtain an approval under the planning Act.

The oil and gas industry is concerned that subdivision approval was not obtained for some leases and do not meet the land titles requirement that persons registering interests comply with any other Act. The industry is concerned that its surface rights needed to be protected and has requested these amendments.

Mr. Speaker, industry views the need to obtain subdivision approval for surface leases as overly restrictive and time-consuming given the high number of leases that are registered. Each year, Mr. Speaker, more than 4,000 well licences are issued and this number continues to grow as the oil and gas industry expands in our province. Obtaining subdivision approval to all of these leases would lead to delay and is counterproductive to fostering development of provincial resources.

Mr. Speaker, the amendments will ensure that existing oil and natural gas surface leases registered against whole parcels without certificate of approval are valid. This will apply to leases made prior to March 1, 2004, notwithstanding they were not approved pursuant to the current or former planning Act.

Excluded from exemption are surface leases that may have been invalidated by a court. Also excluded are surface leases where legal action was commenced prior to March 1, 2004 by a party to a surface lease for non-compliance with the planning Act.

Mr. Speaker, amendments will require oil and gas companies to notify municipalities of the registration of an interest on a title and for survey plans providing surface rights. Municipalities must be aware of oil and gas developments for assessment purposes to trigger municipal permitting processes under local planning bylaws and to address municipal concerns.

Amendments also specify that a registration of an interest in the land registry would be invalid if the municipality was not notified. The intent, Mr. Speaker, is not to invalidate the agreement or interests between the landowner and the oil and gas company, but rather to ensure that notice is given to the municipality. To validate the interest, the company could subsequently give the proper notice and re-register the interest.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, amendments will clarify the exemption for pipeline or power line easements or agreements for a right of way. A certificate of approval will not be required if an affidavit accompanies the plan to the controller of surveys attesting that the line is for distribution or collection purposes and not major transmission.

Amendments made back in 1996 were intended to exempt distribution and collection lines from subdivision approval, and the current amendments will clarify this provision. There is no change in policy in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that there is a need to streamline the surface lease registration process for the oil and gas industry. The amendments will bring the provincial planning system in line with other western provincial governments that do not regulate the oil and gas industry and registration of surface leases. The amendments are evidence of our support for industry and our commitment to maintaining an effective surface lease registration process.

I would urge each and every member of the House to support this Bill, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of Bill No. 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 45, The Planning and Development Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood.

**Mr. Hart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to respond to the second reading of Bill No. 45. And I guess my initial comment is, what took the government so long to take this step? Anything that the government can do to expediate the red tape as such, in the oil and gas industry and in other industries, to help business do its business is certainly a step forward.

One thing that we have heard from the oil and gas industry over the last number of years is that Saskatchewan is a jurisdiction where bureaucratic red tape seems to be a stumbling block, a roadblock for that particular industry, along with other industries. And so certainly anything that can be done . . . and this seems like a positive step forward to streamline the process

so that the oil and gas surface leases can be registered is certainly a positive step.

And also I was pleased to note in the minister's comments that municipalities must be part of the process and I think that certainly is important. And to that extent, I believe this year at the SARM convention or shortly thereafter, the SARM Board of Directors established an economic development committee of SARM so that SARM could work with industries like the oil and gas industry so that the municipalities weren't an impediment to the development of that industry, Mr. Speaker.

The oil and gas industry is an integral part of our economy and hopefully these changes to the leasing requirements will give that industry more incentive and particularly in these times of record crude oil prices, to expand their investment in our province because that is something that we certainly need. We need to have the current industries that are operating in our province expand and grow their businesses, to create more jobs, to have more people living here and paying taxes and contributing to the revenues of the province so that we can do the things that need to be done, whether it be fixing highways or having more money for municipalities or more money for health care or education, Mr. Speaker.

As the minister had indicated, there are a number of changes in this Bill and certainly as an opposition we want to take our time, we want to consult with stakeholders and have their input. But on first blush, it seems like this Bill is certainly a step forward and we would . . . But we reserve the right to consult with interest groups and therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would adjourn debate at this time.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Last Mountain-Touchwood that second reading debate on Bill 45 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

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

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

**Hon. Mr. Taylor:** — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of Bill 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, The Northern Municipalities Act provides the legislative framework through which northern municipalities exercise their powers and provide services to their citizens. The Act provides the statutory authority for northern revenue-sharing grants. The amendments presented today, Mr. Speaker, relate to the payment of revenue-sharing grants and have been identified by my department and recommended by the Department of Justice.

Mr. Speaker, northern revenue-sharing grants are currently paid in quarterly instalments. The amendments will continue this practice and they will add a specific reference to northern settlements in the section that refers to northern municipalities in general. This will clarify some uncertainty raised by Justice about the legal authority for making revenue-sharing payments to northern settlements. We need to make sure that there is no doubt in this regard.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, the amendments will provide for northern revenue-sharing regulations to be made retroactive to the start of the fiscal year, as is the case currently for southern municipalities. As the Act is currently written, regulations concerning northern revenue sharing come into effect when they are registered with the registrar of regulations. We are changing this to be consistent with the practice followed with respect to revenue sharing for urban and rural municipalities.

This amendment will ensure that any delays in approving changes to the regulations or associated with addressing the budget in the legislature do not cause cash flow problems for northern municipalities. Otherwise, no payments could be made until after amendments are made, even though they may already be authorized.

Mr. Speaker, consultations on the 2004 proposed amendments were carried out by Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs and included consultation with the Saskatchewan Association of Northern Communities, known as New North, and the Northern Revenue Sharing Trust Account Management Board. Both organizations agree to the proposed changes concerning the addition of a reference to northern settlements and to enable regulations to be made retroactively.

Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill No. 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004.

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

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 46, The Northern Municipalities Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member from Biggar.

**Mr. Weekes:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill No. 46, An Act to amend The Northern Municipalities Act.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill raises a number of questions that the government is trying to address in this Bill and certainly a concern that these loopholes have existed in the Act in the past. And certainly, Mr. Speaker, we certainly have concerns about what has been going on in the past as far as revenue sharing.

As the minister pointed out, the northern communities, northern municipalities have a very large responsibility for delivering services to its citizens in the North. And as the minister has stated, there obviously has been problems with cash flow because the revenue sharing hasn't been retroactive in the past like it has been in the southern municipalities. And so obviously there's been a concern in the North for a number of years

concerning this problem with finances and the cash flow problems that would be caused by this lack of funding on a timely basis.

Now, Mr. Speaker, as we know, there certainly has been problems in equalization between the federal government and the provincial government. And certainly, if it wasn't for basically the detective work done by an economist, a Saskatchewan-born economist, the mistake that cost Saskatchewan millions of dollars wouldn't been corrected and Saskatchewan would have been out that money.

And now we see that has been corrected, so that really speaks to this Bill and what has been going on in the past. Is the government going to do an audit of the grants to see if any northern communities or the northern municipalities have been short-changed in the past, and if they've been having troubles with cash flow and the delivery of services? Possibly these northern communities are in need of further financial aid to make up for the loss that has occurred because of the lack of funding in the first quarter of the year.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party certainly has always recognized the importance of northern Saskatchewan and the northern people and the great contribution that they have made in the past to the province and will continue to make in ever-increasing amounts in the future.

And, Mr. Speaker, what we have seen today concerning Northern Affairs is really a step back from what the government has . . . what the government pretends to do in the northern areas. We only need to look at the loss of firefighters in the North and comments by the Minister of Culture and Youth and the rollback of 70 jobs for youth in the province.

And, Mr. Speaker, we certainly need to address those areas in particularly in the North as far as economic development and self-sufficiency in the North. As when I toured the North as Environment critic, there certainly was a concern by the people in the North concerning economic development, and, as we know, this Bill really is the foundation to further economic development. Transfer funds and equalization is certainly a big part of that in an area that is not self-sufficient at this time.

And as many people in the North have, at the time of our visit, pointed out that they're just unable to do any business in land that's owned by the Crown and they've been restricted in many cases even to do voluntary non-profit work as far as setting up camps for kids that are in trouble. And they went out and pitched tents and set up basically the camps in the summertime around Pinehouse, and when Northern Affairs found this out, they came down with a heavy hand and stopped this lady from continuing her, really her good Samaritan work and help kids that are having problems.

So I really think the minister and the government needs to look at many things in the North and obviously to address any cash flow problems that these municipalities have been having are certainly, certainly a big issue, and need to address that and to look back and see what . . . has it been happening in the past and try to correct the mistakes that have been made in the past.



And it's interesting. The Bill is trying to define a northern settlement. Well, Mr. Speaker, it seems to be very late in the day now to be trying to define a northern settlement and to make transfer payments and grants to address those concerns in the North, Mr. Speaker.

I think when we talk about northern settlements and northern people, the government needs to look at firefighting. I mean, it's such a large concern for people in the North that live in those areas.

And Mr. Speaker, we also have heard recently about concerns with the dead fish in the northern regions, and the whole issue around forestry and the changes that clear-cutting and those types of practices and cutting right to the edge of the lakes. And the explanation was given that this is a normal phenomenon, but I would have to . . . I believe the government needs to take a look at the practices of the industry in the North concerning cutting right to the edge of lakes and rivers and not only the effect it does have on the fish in those areas, but obviously the effect it has on tourism, the potential tourism in the North.

As we see that, we certainly need to develop the North economically for the good of the whole province, but definitely for the people in the North because the people in the northern regions have a high rate of unemployment. And in order to address those concerns, we certainly have to make sure that through this Bill and other Bills that may be introduced, that the North gets a hand up as far as development and the proper amount of grants and equalization that comes from the provincial government.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, this revenue sharing goes towards things like roads and bridges and highways in the North. And certainly the water situation in the North has always been a very critical situation. As we know, many northern communities are on a boil-water advisory and have been that way for many years. And so any interruption in spending and in grants would certainly be a large issue for those stakeholders in the North.

So, Mr. Speaker, we certainly will look at this Bill as the official opposition. Our critic will be in contact with the stakeholders to get their read on this Bill and see if there's any other changes that need to be made in the future or made to this Bill before we in the official opposition will decide whether we're going to support it or not.

And certainly if there's any problems with this Bill, we will be bringing it up in Committee of the Whole and in question period if necessary. So at this point, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Biggar that the second reading debate on Bill 46 be now adjourned.

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

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

## ADJOURNED DEBATES

### SECOND READINGS

#### Bill No. 12

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Higgins that **Bill No. 12 — The Purchasing Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Ms. Eagles:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to speak on Bill 12, which is An Act respecting Government Purchases. And this is a new Act, Mr. Speaker. And according to the minister, this Act will have a focus on increasing efficiencies and will have cost-saving capabilities by enabling the government to work with schools, health boards, and other public institutions to joint purchase.

According to the minister's second reading, this Bill also makes it easier and less expensive for Saskatchewan suppliers to sell to government. So if it is easier for suppliers, Mr. Speaker, I assume that means there will be less bureaucracy and red tape, which is always a good thing. And, Mr. Speaker, as we're all aware, any time we can get this NDP government to lessen the red tape and the bureaucracy, it's really notable because if there is one thing that this NDP government does really well, it is red tape, regulations, and bureaucracy.

Mr. Speaker, health regions, school districts, RMs, and other public agencies now have the option of using the services of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation) for their purchases. But in saying that, I hope that these public agencies will still give consideration to local private businesses that offer the same services, and give the locals a chance to bid.

The smaller centres in our province are having a really tough go of it out there, and frankly they aren't receiving much help from this NDP government. So this is a concern, Mr. Speaker.

And I mean I can just relate this back to our family farm, where I can go to a larger centre and buy my bulk fuel and fertilizer at a reduced rate, or I can go to the local supplier. And I guess it depends on the dollar saving, but if the saving is just for a few dollars, if the prices are comparable, I always look at the bigger picture and that may include saving my community by shopping locally.

Mr. Speaker, also under this Bill is the allowance to donate furniture and office material that SPMC owns but no longer needs to non-profit organizations within the province. A lot of organizations will benefit from such donations and therefore a lot of individuals would benefit.

I remember touring the food bank here in Regina a couple of years ago and seeing many computer systems lined up there. And so I actually phoned back there this last week and spoke to a gentleman and he told me that the computers and many other donations were from private businesses and other sources. On speaking to this gentleman, Mr. Speaker, he stated how they offer adult computer classes and they also offer kids' classes in computers, and many of these children do not have access to the

computers at home. In fact, Mr. Speaker, many of them are toddlers from different daycare facilities from the core area, and while it may seem like play to these kids, it is still very educational.

And of course, Mr. Speaker, computers are just one example of the many donations. There's others such as kitchen equipment that allows for cooking classes to take place, and the list goes on. If someone can benefit from the donation of office equipment, furniture, or appliances, that is positive, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there is a mention of the environment in this Bill, and we are all becoming more and more environmentally aware. And this Bill does give public agencies the ability to give additional consideration to environmentally friendly products.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to move this Bill to committee where we can deal with the specific questions that we have on this Bill. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** — There being no further speakers, the item before the Assembly is the motion moved by the minister of SPMC, that Bill No. 12, The Purchasing Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

**Clerk Assistant:** — Second reading of this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the minister for SPMC.

**Hon. Ms. Higgins:** — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill 12, The Purchasing Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for SPMC that Bill No. 12 be now referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

### Bill No. 35

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 35 — The Crown Corporations Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to enter debate on this particular piece of legislation today — No.

35 an Act to amend the Crown Corporations Act, 1993.

Mr. Speaker, looking at this particular piece of legislation, rather brief and on first glance innocuous, but I suppose it isn't a case of the devil being in the details here, it's what's not said in this particular piece of legislation that concerns me and my colleagues more than anything, and also some of the insinuations that arise from this particular piece of legislation that haven't been addressed directly but do need some clarification and some opportunity for review.

I'd just like to read some of the Act into the record, Mr. Speaker, if I may. We have clause (r.1) which reads:

establish, operate, administer or manage programs or policies that promote, enhance or foster employment and career opportunities in Crown corporations and subsidiary Crown corporations.

Mr. Speaker, on the surface of it that seems clear enough and simple enough. And you wouldn't think that that type of effort would have to be written into a piece of legislation. You would think that that would be the kind of thing that would happen automatically as part of a Crown agency carrying on its business.

But under the explanatory notes, I read that the government is committed to address the anticipated human resources shortfall in the Crown corporations.

This change is intended to clarify authority to undertake human resource programs on behalf of the Crown corporations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it might not be necessary to specifically address this particular shortfall of personnel if we had an economy that was growing at a rate whereby people would be readily available for employment opportunities within the Crowns.

I think that this particular piece of legislation and this clause specifically takes into consideration the fact that Saskatchewan is in a very difficult situation right now. Demographically, we have more as a percentage of total population of senior citizens in this province. We have a huge cohort of young people 18 or 19 and under.

(15:00)

But the workforce, that group of people that would be 20 to 21 right through to 55, is a diminishing resource in this province. And to complicate matters even further, Mr. Speaker, many of the people that are working currently — for Crown corporations in particular — are among what is known as the baby boomer generation and they're within, anywhere from 5 to 15 years of retirement. So by the year 2017, Crown corporations like many other entities are going to be in serious requirement or serious need of replacement employees.

And I think the fact of the matter is that, with the declining population, with out-migration, with the other factors that contribute to our shortage of skilled personnel in this province, it is seen as necessary, incumbent on the Crown corporations to

undertake an aggressive recruitment program to find replacement workers over the next 10 to 15 years.

Section (r.2) of this particular piece of legislation reads as follows:

for the purposes of clause (r.1) and subject to subsection (8), provide financial assistance to post-secondary educational institutions in Saskatchewan that are recognized by the Minister of Learning;

You know, that struck me as rather strange, Mr. Speaker. Why would a piece of legislation contain a clause like that, especially a piece of legislation pertaining to Crown corporations?

And it would seem to me that what we have here is a tacit admission, that not only are we going to be short in supply for employment purposes — that employable people will be in short supply — but the Crown corporations are going to have to actively finance the education of people who may be employable by the Crowns. And to that end, the Crowns need the legislative authority to fund post-secondary learning institutions.

That suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that the government of the day is not all that convinced that through general revenues, through other sources of funding, that the government is going to be able to meet the needs of training required for suitable employees, and that the Crowns may have to undertake their own funding practices in relationship to training programs at post-secondary institutions that are recognized by the Minister of Learning to achieve the employment pool requirements for the Crowns.

So that strikes me as strange. And I'm not so sure it's an appropriate method of using Crown profits. It may be an interesting twist on public policy but I'm not so sure that that's really the role of Crown corporations.

And thirdly:

“(r.3) establish, operate, administer or manage programs or policies that promote or enhance business opportunities in and for Saskatchewan”.

Well, Mr. Speaker, when I read that particular clause, it didn't concern me very much. Just a superficial reading one could overlook what the innate meaning of this particular clause might be. But on reflection, Mr. Speaker, it's saying that the Crown corporations can use money to fund promotional programs. And when I got thinking about that, Mr. Speaker, it occurred to me that this probably is nothing more than a retroactive legislative authority to finance the Future is Wide Open campaign.

Mr. Speaker, are you familiar with that particular campaign? I think everybody in the province has heard about, the future is wide open. And we heard that the program was initially going to be funded by the Department of Industry and Resources to the tune of \$2 million.

And then as questions arose about the importance of that piece of political advertising, and whether or not it was necessary or

appropriate, or whether it was achieving its desired ends, it became common knowledge that quite a bit more money had gone into that particular televised campaign. Instead of a \$2 million campaign, the Crown corporations had contributed to it and it suddenly became a \$6 million campaign. And it's estimated that over the course of its life, the campaign ultimately could cost taxpayers \$12 million.

So much of that funding has come from Crown corporations, I'm beginning to wonder whether or not Crowns legitimately had the legal authority to fund that kind of advertising. I would suggest from this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker, that the Crowns did not have the legal authority to do so and now in retrospect the government has decided to retroactively make legislative authority available to themselves to justify the actions that they have taken and the money they have spent.

So I think in some respects, Mr. Speaker, as innocuous as this piece of legislation appeared to be, it's . . .

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

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Mr. Speaker, I would ask leave to introduce guests.

**The Speaker:** — The member for Batoche has requested leave for introductions. Is leave granted?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

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

#### INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

**Mr. Kirsch:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you in the east gallery, 26 students from Lake Lenore, and under the leadership of Mr. Ralph Viczko. Welcome to your legislature. Thank you for coming.

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

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

#### ADJOURNED DEBATES

#### SECOND READINGS

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

**Mr. Elhard:** — Mr. Speaker, it's always nice to have your speech interrupted by the presence in the gallery of another school group. The reality is that these are learning opportunities for students, and we welcome them here and we appreciate the effort that they take and the time they take to visit the legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I really think that clause (r.3) in this particular piece of legislation is a backdoor attempt by the government to justify and to give legal authority to something they've already

done. And I think as a consequence that we have the right to ask very serious questions about how it was that the government compelled Crown corporations to contribute to a televised and basically a political promotion on behalf of all taxpayers, through the Crowns, without legal authority to do so previously. And I think those are the kinds of questions we're going to be asking the minister when this particular piece of legislation comes before committee.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at some of the highlights of the second reading debate that happened when this Bill was first introduced. And if I may, I'll just have to reiterate some of the comments I've made earlier and maybe cover some ground again. But according to the minister's comments at that time, by the year 2017 more than half of the current employees of Crown corporations will be able to retire or will have retired and that's going to put undue stress on the operations of the Crown corporations. If they are to maintain the services that they are obligated to provide to the people of Saskatchewan, they are going to have to recruit aggressively.

And whether or not there will be adequate manpower sources within the province is in question, unless, Mr. Speaker, unless of course the Crowns and other businesses that might operate in the province tap into the vast pool of Aboriginal youth that will be coming into the workforce over the next 5 to 15 years.

And I think that this legislation recognizes that vast untapped pool and the good fortune that the province of Saskatchewan has in having a cohort of young people of that number available to the workforce as we look into the future.

And the government as part of its employment strategy, its training strategy, and its efforts to engage the Aboriginal youth of this province in the economy, have specifically said that this program of employment opportunity with Crown corporations will in large measure be directed to Aboriginal youth.

Now I don't want to have a problem with that. That's a laudable goal. And I think that it's something we all have come to recognize as a potential benefit to the province that we incorporate in every area possible Aboriginal youth in the economy of the province. But I do have a question, Mr. Speaker, about what the cost of that's going to be.

The government has committed \$20 million to this program over a five-year period. They've committed that money to the Crowns to train Aboriginal young people. The goal is to have 1,000 young people participate ultimately.

Now if you do the arithmetic, Mr. Speaker, that amounts to \$20,000 per job. And if that \$20,000 is to go to cover wages of the new employees, that's one thing. But I don't get that impression in reading the minister's comments or some of the other material that has been provided to us as part of the support for that particular initiative.

If \$20,000 is partially or wholly going to wages, that's not too much money. But if it's \$20,000 per job for training, I think that that is far, far higher than the national average would be for training in instances where people are coming into the workforce. I think if you look at the private sector and you maybe look at other government initiatives, \$20,000 would

seem significantly higher than is required generally speaking.

And I need to get some clarification on that too, Mr. Speaker, because you know it's important to employ people, but if the cost of training far outstrips the, sort of the national average, then we have to ask questions about how this program is being put together, how it's going to be managed, and what kind of justification there might be for those excessive costs. So those will be questions we will want to ask of the minister as well.

Mr. Speaker, the third area I guess that signals some concern, or provokes some concern on our part, was the minister's comments on page 757 of the April 26 *Hansard*, where she said:

... we want our Crowns to be the employer of choice for Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that there'd be any debate around that particular statement if the minister had said, we would like our Crowns to be (a) one of ... part of the employers of choice available in this province. That isn't what the minister said, and she was very specific. We want our Crowns to be the employer of choice for Saskatchewan people.

And I guess that sort of singular focus on the Crowns as the employer of choice not only raises alarm bells with the official opposition but it's raised alarm bells with the business community in this province, because they — whether the government agrees with us or not — the business community in this province feel that they contribute pretty significantly to the success of this province.

They feel that they contribute a lot of tax money, a lot of employment opportunities, a lot of innovation, a lot of distinct service delivery and capability. And to have that whole effort by the private sector sort of relegated to second place or worse by this type of attitude is a very great disservice to the people, the men and women who dedicate their daily activities to making their business a success.

And I think that what this particular comment speaks to is the attitude of this government, Mr. Speaker. This government has a very clear agenda, and the agenda is to make the Crown corporations the single most important part of the economic future of this province. And I think that that is not only a disservice to the private sector components of our economy, but it also sends a very, very poor signal to any business or any company that might consider relocating to Saskatchewan or setting up business in Saskatchewan, and trying to make their business opportunities thrive in this particular province.

Because if the government has the bias of the Crowns being the primary place for people to be employed or the primary source of economic activity, it does so at the disservice and the disincentive of every other competitor. And I think that we will be the poorer for that, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that concerns me about that particular attitude or mentality, Mr. Speaker, is that we've already seen, to our great regret frankly, the number of opportunities, investment opportunities, that some Crown corporations ... not all, I'm not casting a broad net here, Mr. Speaker. But some Crown

corporations have spent money in faraway places, in countries all around the world, and it's been to our financial loss.

(15:15)

We know specifically that SaskTel International lost \$70 million in those kind of ventures in just the last three years alone. I'm not going to recite all of those particular losses because you're familiar with them, Mr. Speaker. The government is familiar with them. And in fact, whether they will admit it or not, that was part of the reason they decided to create some type of investment review panel, because they knew we were right. They knew the people of the province had serious concerns about those losses.

And, you know, if you put all your eggs in those Crown baskets and they don't work properly, there's a whale of an impact that can be felt on the rest of the economy. And if you undermine the vibrancy and the opportunities of the private sector by competing head-to-head with the private sector, the government has all the weight of taxpayers' money and all the legal authority and all the resources of unlimited revenue to conduct an unfair battle.

And the preponderance of evidence is that the government is prepared to use that weight, that legal weight, that authority, and that financial resource to win the day when Crowns compete against the private sector. So, Mr. Speaker, we think that the minister's comments speak directly to the attitude of this government, the mentality of this government to push the Crown corporation agenda ahead of their concerns and interests in the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, we have a number of issues that we feel need to be attended to as part of this legislation yet. We would like a little more time to speak to this Bill in the future. We think that there is a number of questions that have just recently arisen as a result of this piece of legislation, even though it's very brief and doesn't speak directly to some of our concerns. We think the underlying issues that have suddenly come to our attention need to be addressed.

And so at this time, I would move that we adjourn debate.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Cypress Hills that second reading debate on Bill 35 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

### Bill No. 22

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Wartman that **Bill No. 22 — The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

**Mr. Stewart:** — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my great pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to this Bill, Bill 22, The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, now this Bill purports to give credit unions the ability to act more like banks in relation to programs governed by the Act. This Act, The Credit Union Act, has gone through very major overhauls during the last several years, and the intent has been to put credit unions on more or less the same footing as banks and other financial institutions in terms of their legal authority. The intent is to level the playing field, Mr. Speaker, between credit unions and banks although this Bill doesn't suggest levelling the playing field when it comes to taxation and, more particularly, the special and extremely onerous corporate capital tax that is levied on financial institutions other than credit unions in this province, Mr. Speaker. If the playing field is to be levelled, perhaps we should look at levelling it in that regard as well.

Credit unions, however, do play a very important role in many of our smaller communities, and they are the primary financial institution for many of our rural people and many of our agricultural producers. And as banks pull out and have pulled out of small town Saskatchewan, credit unions have filled that void. And as we see more and more of the chartered banks move out of small centres, the importance of credit unions increases, and they become more and more valuable asset to rural Saskatchewan.

The minister suggests that because of the way the rules are currently applied, there are some difficulties for credit unions, specifically with some of the rules that are currently in place for credit unions that make it impossible for them to take certain farm property into account for the purposes of providing security on loans. Therefore it has been difficult for the credit unions to take part in certain farm programs. Accordingly, this Bill would change that, Mr. Speaker. And while there are plenty of questions about the taxation issue and other issues generally, I think that I would be in support of those changes.

Our goal is to make farm programs work well for our producers. And if enabling the credit unions to act on a more of level playing field with other financial institutions, including our chartered banks, aid in that endeavour — that's well and good with me and with those of us on this side of this Hon. Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

But that's something that has not always been the case with the NDP. It hasn't necessarily been only outdated regulations that have made these programs, these farm programs, less than effective, Mr. Speaker. It's been the attitude of this NDP government and the members opposite. Consistently, Mr. Speaker, the NDP, in negotiating farm programs, refuses to go to the table. And not surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, the result is — the inevitable final result — is that the programs that are developed are not in Saskatchewan's best interests.

And specifically, Mr. Speaker, the AIDA (Agricultural Income Disaster Assistance) program — this NDP government was not at the table when the AIDA program was negotiated between the provinces and the federal government. CFIP (Canadian Farm Income Program), Mr. Speaker, the follow-up to the AIDA program — not surprising this government was not at the

table when that program was negotiated between the provinces and the federal government either.

And finally now, with the APF (agricultural policy framework) — they were not at the table. At first they were not at the table when the preliminary agreement was hammered out. They refused to go to the table, Mr. Speaker. And then when they did, and in conjunction with other provinces were successful in obtaining changes to the APF including covering negative margins and increasing the cap for payouts, Mr. Speaker, then when they were successful in achieving those changes in conjunction with other provinces, and particularly Ontario, then they turned around, Mr. Speaker, and said that oops, we can't afford those changes we bargained for and were successful in achieving. We'll opt out.

And so that's more of a problem in implementing farm programs and changing of the Act that governs the credit unions and farm financing, Mr. Speaker.

Apart from that, Mr. Speaker, the NDP's delay in signing onto the PFRA (Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Program) water program, which means that Saskatchewan producers can't access this federal money to drill wells and to dig dugouts on their properties . . . and this, in a year that's dry all over this province, Mr. Speaker, and record dry, record dry in many areas.

The budget, the recent budget is a full-scale attack on rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. And compared with levelling the playing field for credit unions, this is serious business, Mr. Speaker. It makes levelling the playing field for credit unions look like child's play. Mr. Speaker, in that federal budget . . . the government said during the election campaign that they would implement the recommendations of the Boughen Commission. And this is extremely important for agricultural producers, Mr. Speaker, because property tax and agricultural . . . in rural Saskatchewan is extremely onerous — the most onerous farm property tax in the country and by quite a bit.

So during the election campaign, this government stated and this Premier said that the recommendations of the Boughen Commission could be implemented under the existing taxation regime. And so people accepted that at face value.

And after the election, Mr. Speaker, the Premier then said that well yes, we will be implementing the main recommendation of the Boughen Commission — which of course is removing some of the costs of property tax from . . . or the cost of education from property — but we'll have to increase the PST (provincial sales tax) to do it because we don't have quite as much money as we thought. And then in the budget, Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier did raise the PST, but they forgot to remove the education costs for any of the education burden from property tax.

Mr. Speaker, besides that, other problems that this government has created for the implementation of farm programs that make levelling the playing field for credit unions look like a walk in the park include the closure of 22 of the province's 31 rural service centres. Mr. Speaker, these are institutions that farmers have come to rely on all over the province. They've performed a valuable function and at a very, at a very modest cost to the

taxpayers of this province.

In that recent budget, this government also closed nine Saskatchewan environment offices, all in rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker, adding to the shutdown in rural Saskatchewan. And now that they're talking about closing and scaling down an undisclosed number of health care facilities and long-term care beds, we don't know where that's all going to end. We've asked many times for the minister to tell us what's going to be closed and what's going to be eliminated, but so far no answers.

In a callous attack on farm families in this province, this government eliminated the farm fuel tax rebate on gasoline and propane bought at retail and instituted a 20 per cent reduction in the rebate on bulk farm fuel purchases. They've also cancelled the livestock and horticultural facilities incentive program, Mr. Speaker, almost in the same breath that they encourage diversification in the livestock production in Saskatchewan. The two fly in the face of each other. And compared to levelling the playing field for credit unions, this is extremely serious.

They've also cancelled the farm family opportunities initiative and the Conservation Cover Program, Mr. Speaker, which . . . The Conservation Cover Program helped producers to have marginal land put into forage production which of course goes hand in hand with diversifying into livestock, which this government pays lip service to but takes this program away from producers, a program that had a very moderate cost to it and was successful in having many acres of marginal farm land turned back to grass.

An \$825,000 reduction to the funding for Prairie Diagnostic Services lab — there are two labs actually, Mr. Speaker — one in Saskatoon and one in Regina. These are the laboratories that are responsible for, among other things, chronic wasting disease testing in both wild game and in domestic farm animals, Mr. Speaker, and BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy) and all sorts of pneumonia-related diseases, and a valuable asset to the agricultural community. The loss of these labs will mean far more to the agricultural community than what little good this Act will do to level the playing fields for credit unions, Mr. Speaker.

They've also eliminated the short-term hog loan program and the livestock drought program, Mr. Speaker. The hog industry, the last couple of years, has been in a tailspin with very low prices for product. And now that the government has eliminated this short-term hog program, we see that the American hog producers are looking at a duty on Canadian hogs going into the United States, which will be another kick for the hog industry, Mr. Speaker.

And closure of the extension services branch — Mr. Speaker, these people provided a great service for the agricultural community and very hands-on. There is just nothing to replace them.

Mr. Speaker, I guess in summary, there are lots of problems with implementing farm programs. And levelling the playing field for credit unions does, on the face of it, seem like a worthy and good idea.

(15:30)

But there are taxation issues — as I have mentioned — so if this Act comes into force, give the credit unions better than a level playing field. And the problems that have been created within implementing farm programs in Saskatchewan are very little, there's very little relationship between that and levelling the playing fields for credit unions.

But this government is at fault for all of those things I have listed, and that's what's hurting rural Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. It's not the fact that credit unions may not have perfectly level playing field.

And so, Mr. Speaker, I think with those things in mind that I'd move to adjourn debate on this Bill.

**The Speaker:** — It has been moved by the member for Thunder Creek that second reading debate on Bill No. 22 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Speaker:** — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

## COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

### General Revenue Fund Environment Vote 26

#### Subvote (ER01)

**The Chair:** — Order. Committee of Finance. The first item before the committee, the consideration of estimates for the Department of the Environment, vote 26, found on page 53 of the Estimates book. And I recognize the Minister of the Environment to introduce his officials and, if he wishes, to make a brief statement.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. First, I'd like to introduce my officials here today. And to my left is Lily Stonehouse, deputy minister. To my right is Alan Parkinson, associate deputy minister. Now right behind me is Dave Phillips, assistant deputy minister. This is Lynn Tulloch, executive director. Behind Lynn Tulloch is Donna Johnson, director of finance and administration.

As well, joining us today is Stuart Kramer, president of Saskatchewan Watershed Authority. And as well, we have another official from Watershed Authority, Wayne Dybvig.

And so I'd like to take this opportunity to say a few things and of course I'd like to say again that the Government of Saskatchewan has renewed its commitment to the environment and to our economic future by pledging to create a green and prosperous economy.

Saskatchewan Environment will lead development of a government-wide green strategy that will build a shared vision for environmental management in this province. Our 2004-2005 performance plan established the foundation for a new, more

effective and progressive environmental and resource management program.

The plan identifies a shift in management focus and activities towards a continuous improvement in environmental stewardship across all sources of pollution. Mr. Chair, the department is focusing its efforts on issues with the greatest risks to humans, the environment, and our natural resources.

We are developing stronger monitoring and analytical capabilities to better understand the effect of our actions that they're having on the environment. We are creating an integrated monitoring unit to direct monitoring activities on broader strategic issues such as the cumulative effects of environmental impacts, better understanding of air and source water quality issues, and the impacts of quality change.

Mr. Chair, we are also creating a special enforcement unit to focus on investigations of significant environmental damage or resource abuse.

As well, Mr. Chair, to maximize the benefits of environmental compliance activities, a risks-based approach will be adopted that annually focuses the department's efforts in the most needed areas and then measures success. These compliance-related activities will focus on clean air, water, and land with healthy wildlife, fisheries, and forest resources.

Mr. Chair, consistent with the government's emphasis on safe and healthy communities, all the recommendations of the North Battleford commission of inquiry directed at the Government of Saskatchewan have been completed or are being addressed. Safe drinking water continues to be a high priority for our government.

Another priority for our department, forest fire suppression expenditures, protect the people and communities of this province. This government recognizes the importance of our fire management program and has increased the forest fire program budget by \$28 million. Saskatchewan's wildfire program has been reorganized in an effort to continue to protect what is most important to people and to allow wildfire to play a more active and beneficial role on the landscape. The people of this province, Mr. Chair, the communities, and the high-value commercial timber will receive the highest level of protection.

In 2003 we launched a wildfire prevention education program which was designed to reduce the number of human-caused wildfires. This campaign has received additional funding this year; it will be expanded to cover all of the forested areas of Saskatchewan. Reducing the number of human-caused wildfires will help us protect people, communities, and valuable commercial resources, and save on suppression costs. The best fire is the one that doesn't start, Mr. Chair.

The department will continue to be vigilant in safeguarding our natural resources and environment to provide sustainable development of the economy. We will maintain the forest services' ISO (International Organization for Standardization) 14001 designation, assure that sustainable forest allocations and work with the federal government will resolve the softwood lumber trade dispute with the federal government.

Our fish and wildlife resources generate significant economic benefits to the province, and we will work to ensure these resources are maintained by focusing on habitat and ecosystem management and putting more resources into investigating cases of serious resource abuse.

Mr. Chair, Saskatchewan people have a great appreciation for our provincial parks. Each year almost 2.5 million people visit our 34 provincial parks. This translates into well over \$68 million annually in economic impact for our province. Several parks have new program centres to help provide interpretation and education to park visitors. There are also more electrified campsites and full-service campsites designed to accommodate RVs (recreational vehicle), new trails, as well as many other new and renovated facilities. Visitors this year will enjoy a quality educational and recreational experience in our provincial parks.

Mr. Chair, the Department of Environment's budget has increased \$162 million in 2004. We have over 1,500 people dedicated to protecting our environment and resources, and they are located in more than 40 offices around the province. Through this budget the department will complete the actions identified in our performance plan and improve our environmental and resource management programs. We will work with the people of this province to build on and deliver our commitment to a green and prosperous economy.

Now I would also like to say that I'm grateful to the staff of Saskatchewan Environment. These people are hard-working, who are dedicated to conserving our environment. Their willingness to consult with stakeholder groups and the public is essential to reach the shared goals of protecting our environment. Their willingness to provide day-to-day programs and services helps to make a real difference in the lives of the people of Saskatchewan.

So thank you very much. I look forward to answering the questions from the opposition now. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And welcome to the minister and officials here this afternoon. We've got about an hour and 20 minutes or so, and I have a number of questions and I have a number of my colleagues that want to get in to ask a few questions specific to their area. Mine's going to be a little bit more general in terms of questions.

One of the things I guess that I would comment on — I mean we're all in favour of a healthy environment in our province but we're really getting used to the rhetoric about the green and prosperous economy and how much our parks generate and the value of our parks. Yet we saw in the initial onset of this legislative period that we're going to keep the parks closed. And fortunately people came to their senses and reopened it, because we value our park system. It's a huge, huge part of our tourism industry. But to think that we could keep them closed for an extra month to save some money was far beyond many of our wildest beliefs that that would actually happen.

And there's a number of issues that are very difficult to comprehend as to why we're doing it. And I guess the very first

question I would like to ask the minister goes right back to what I was talking about in question period, and it's the reduction of firefighting services and the firefighting capacity. And our, again, most valued resources in the province is our forests — or one of. But we keep referring to it as an extremely valuable resource. And I agree with that; it's a valuable resource. And the question in question period today was relatively direct and simple: how many positions have we lost in firefighting personnel in the North as a result of the budget cuts?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, the answer is straightforward as I answered this this afternoon. It's status quo, as is. There were no jobs lost in the North fighting fires. So it's straightforward.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister, and I will be holding you to that. Because from my understanding in talking to the people in the North, there's been a number of positions that have been eliminated. So I'm going to keep you to that.

My next question I have is, we've heard the statement, a green and prosperous economy. And we've heard that for the last two months. And I would like the minister to define what a green and prosperous economy is, because I don't think I've heard anybody ever really describe what a green and prosperous economy is other than in rhetoric. So I would ask the minister if he could provide a definition what a green and prosperous economy is.

(15:45)

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you very much. I appreciate the question. It's one that I'm often asked, what does it mean, the green and prosperous economy, and we often talk about it. In fact, I think I talked a little bit about it in my opening remarks.

We're pretty straightforward about what economy is and what prosperous is. You know, we want the economy to grow and to flourish and to have people have well-paying jobs and a future here in the province — and especially young people.

The question really, I think, focuses around what does green mean. And I think what we really look at, what we're really talking about, is sustainability and how can we have an economy that can continue to grow that matches well with the environment. And I would think of a couple of examples that would be worthwhile.

One is particularly around water and water conservation and that type of thing. Water is a very important part of our economy. Another one is the work we do around energy, and how can we make sure our energy is the most efficient and effective that it can be and the work that we're pretty excited about in terms of hydrogen and that type of thing. So those are kind of the exciting things.

And the other thing that we're really looking at is how can we, as a department but also a government, be more of a help, a positive role in the economy in terms of when we deal with our regulations that the industry knows what our role is — that we are doing regulations but they know that we want to talk about best practices, that type of thing.



I would want to highlight a couple of tours that I've been on, one that was very interesting this past weekend up north with the uranium industry, but also one that was very good out at IPSCO. And we signed an agreement with them talking about best practices. And it's one that just makes sure the government talks to industry in terms of how can we make sure that the environmental impacts are minimal. They understand our regulations, understand our role but we understand that industry wants to know with some certainty what the regulations are but are they allowed to engage in best practices with environment.

And IPSCO I would hold up as a real model industry. They have been certified ISO 14001, as has our forestry branch — very important. So has Weyerhaeuser. Different things like that. Very important to say we're talking about sustainability. So thanks.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well thank you, Mr. Minister. I've heard that phrase so often. We all probably have our own definition of what a prosperous economy is and how to achieve a prosperous economy. And we also I think, all have a feeling of how we can help the environment. But the phrase has been a catch-all phrase that I don't believe has ever been fully explained to the people of this province, other than the rhetoric of we support a green and prosperous economy.

It leads to the next question. And I'm going to go through this subvote by subvote only because we've just heard you explain about how we want a green and prosperous economy and how important the environment issues are. And we see some pretty massive cuts within the Department of the Environment. So there's a little bit of a dichotomy there. We support a green and prosperous economy but we're going to take money away from you.

Now I'm just going to ask you to clarify this because in your opening remarks you — I believe correctly, I heard you correctly — stated that the budget has actually increased to approximately \$162 million. And if you look at estimates, that's probably correct.

But now if you look at actuals, I have the third quarter where we were at \$180 million. So if we were in the third quarter at \$180 million forecast at the end of the third quarter of last year, and now estimating \$162 million this year, my computer doesn't add that up as being an increase. Could you explain?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — I would say that the major difference from last year and this year is the cost of fighting fires. Last year the cost was 77 million and this year our funding will be 65 million, and that's the significant part of it.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you Mr. Minister. Again we're looking at what I say is overall cuts to the department. And firefighting yes, but from 180 million to 162 million to me is a cut. Now you may debate it's due to the firefighting, but in fact if you're dropping that much money it is a reduction.

Mr. Minister, is there any other department in the government that took a cut in funding as much as the Environment department because I make this out to about a 10 per cent reduction? Is there any other department that has suffered a 10 per cent reduction in this budget?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well I think in response to that question, I know that it was a tough budget. We had to respond to the challenges we had to meet the priorities that we had set out in front of us. But in response to that particular question and how other departments responded, I think that may be a question better asked to the Minister of Finance, and today I'd like to just stick to where we're at.

We were asked to respond to the challenge and we felt this is something that we could do and deliver the . . . our priorities. But it was a tough budget to prepare and we took our time to balance our priorities against the constraints that we had to live within and I think we accomplished that.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Minister, I'm sure that you had the opportunity to sit around the cabinet table and fight for your department. You must have a feeling as to whether this is . . . if other departments were better fighters than yourself for their department or not.

And considering what we heard in the election, to keep election promises about a green and prosperous economy . . . and that's why I asked for the definition of green because we have seen cuts; we have seen cuts in areas and we'll be talking about more cuts.

So on one hand we're talking about this nice green and prosperous economy, and then we're talking an increase in budget, where in fact it's a decrease to what was actually spent last year to this year, which is a decrease. And yet we're saying we're keeping all of our promises about a green economy and how much priorities we have for the environment when we're actually cutting services. How do you explain that to the people of this province?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in response to the question I want to say as I've said many times in the House, that the budget was tough but we had priorities. And I would challenge the idea that every minister goes in there fighting for a narrow slice. We fight for the whole province and the health of this province, both for the people and for the environment. And I felt very supported by my colleagues. I continue to feel that support.

These are challenging times. And we had to make some priorities. And we did that — health and education. But I feel very supported by the government side over here and our priorities of safe drinking water, implementing our safe drinking water strategy, our environmental assessment, and it goes through there.

I would really want to encourage the member opposite — and I mean this sincerely; I talk to many people about this actually — is to take a look at our performance plan. I think that it's forward-looking, it's visionary, and it sets out not only for this year but for the next many years how the Department of Environment will continue to work and set its goals and set priorities within Environment to meet those demands, and yet be a part of government. And I'm pretty proud of that performance plan. And so I think that we've got the resources to meet our priorities, and we'll do that.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well it's interesting, Mr. Chair, because

we've heard it numerous times, the priorities of this government and some tough choices. But the priorities are health and education and a green and prosperous economy, and yet the green and prosperous economy takes a hit.

And I just want to go through some of these and so the minister has a chance to explain to the people of this province how he and his department are going to handle it. And I know we've talked about forest fires already, and that in itself is probably an hour topic, and we won't be touching on all of that today.

But I just wanted to go through again some of the subvotes because we look at it, and there's an awful lot of people out in the rural areas of this province, outside of the centre of Regina, that have a big question mark as to why things are being done and how come, and how it's affecting people that are at the cold face.

And we look at compliance and field services as a subvote. And the budget this year has been reduced from 23.8 to \$22.2 million — that's in compliance and field service. That's a 7 per cent reduction. And how, how does the minister explain how services will be provided in enforcement from last year to this year with a 7 per cent reduction in compliance and field services?

(16:00)

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, I appreciate the question around compliance because it is an important area. And as we know, we've gone through a reorganization in our department to allow us to set priorities, to do some strategic analysis of the issues that are facing Saskatchewan in terms of management of its natural resources.

And so we're doing a bit of risk analysis — this is very important — prioritizing our efforts, working a little smarter I would say, and grouping the conservation officers so they can be deployed more effectively, sharing resources, developing more specialized knowledge, that type of thing. And then we can deploy them anywhere in the province. And I think this is an important aspect of how our plans are working.

So that it's a strategy, it is change, and we appreciate it. And I appreciate the comments about rural Saskatchewan and right through the province, because there has been some changes and so this will take some time. But we are confident that in fact we'll be working better than before. And so we'll be focusing our efforts around the areas that pose greatest risk to the environment, and this is very important. So we'll be setting those priorities, working smarter, and I think that we'll do a great job.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, we'll definitely be in the wait-and-see mode on that one, Mr. Minister. Part of this compliance and field services also, part of the responsibility is for emergency response to hazardous spills. How many incidents of such spills have there been in the last couple years or so, and how will this response team be affected by this large cut to compliance and field services?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in terms of the specific numbers of spills, I'd like to say to the member that I'll get

back to him with the specific number over the last three or so years. And so I will do that.

But in terms of the conservation officers who will be in over 40 communities, they act as first responders in those situations. Their role is to secure the site. And so they are pretty important. They have a pretty important role in this kind of thing.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Mr. Chair, am I correct in hearing you, that conservation officers are the first responders for hazardous spills?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Yes. Yes, they act as first responders and they secure the site. That's what happens with emergency spills.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you. And, Mr. Chair, we have just been talking about cuts and the effect of cuts. Now I just . . . Correct me if I'm wrong, but we just reduced the number of conservation officers. How is this going to effect a hazardous spill if they are the first responders?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, there has been reductions as there have been in other areas as well — 18 fewer. But we still have 200 conservation officers and 40 offices throughout the province, and so our presence is still out there and they'll do a good job.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — So I take it then from the minister, that there will be absolutely no degradation of services because of the lack of 18 conservation officers not being employed in the rural areas. Is that your statement?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — No, in fact it's the opposite of this in terms of . . . This is a really good example of how we set our priorities. And we work to the ones that have the biggest risk to our environment and so a hazardous belt would fit that criteria well.

You know in terms of cuts, it's always tough and we appreciate the good work but we've reorganized. We are now setting priorities in a different way that we did it before. So we're still working to a very high standard.

And I want to be clear that people who worked before did a very outstanding job but now we've reorganized. We're doing much more risk analysis, setting our priorities, gathering the conservation officers together, grouping them so they can be more effective with the resources they have and a specialized knowledge so they can meet the needs of our province.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. And to the minister, that's what has people like me extremely worried, this saving money by cutting and reorganization. How did we do in health care? I mean this is a rhetorical question. We made 52 hospital cuts and reorganized and spending three times the amount of money, and we still have the worst waiting lists.

And I'm always worried when somebody stands up in this room and says, trust us, because things are going to be better because we are making substantial cuts, but it's okay because we're reorganizing. So for somebody to stand up or for the minister to stand up and say, we're making massive cuts but it's okay because things will be great, just trust us, and I think the people

of the province have a very, very downward feeling because of this because we want to centralize and try and run things out of Regina. And the cold face is the one that's taking the brunt of the hit.

And I think the people of the province are going to have a little backlash exactly for that reason — we want to centralize it; we want to reorganize it; we want cuts, but we want them cut specifically out into the areas that may not be supportive to the current government. And I think this is what the people of the province are extremely, extremely worried about.

And I just want to go on to the next line item and it fits along the same theme — resource stewardship. Now you understand what resource stewardship is, but I would just like to read what resource stewardship is supposed to be:

Develops . . . (evaluate) plans for renewable resource allocation and ecosystem management programs . . . with priorities aimed at ensuring environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

Now I'd read that again if there's somebody that doesn't understand it. It's:

. . . priorities aimed at ensuring environmental protection and sustainable economic development.

And, Mr. Chair, that received a budget cut of 21 per cent.

So we just got finished talking about how great we are; trust us because we're doing so much good for the environment; we're doing so much good for our green and prosperous economy, but, oh, by the way, we're going to take another 21 per cent out of resource stewardship. Twenty-one per cent reduction. How will the programs under this subvote be affected?

(16:15)

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in terms of the questions around the resource stewardship line, I appreciate the concern. And of course because of the reorganization, there will be different ways that the money will be allocated this time.

And so, for example, \$800,000 that was typically in the resource stewardship now has been moved over to the planning and risk analysis area for the integrated monitoring unit. What we've done there is group the scientists together so we can have more impact, again a better use of resources as we go through these constraints. So there's \$800,000 there, as well \$200,000 that we won't be needing again as we completed a project at Rafferty dam regarding the habitat. So that speaks to some of the concerns there.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Chair, we may come back to that one, but I have a number of my colleagues that would like to get in this afternoon. So I'm going to just go down the subvotes a little bit, and I really want to bring this up today.

And it goes back to my earlier question about job reductions, which the minister has stated there will not be any job reductions in firefighting. He stated that today and he stated it just earlier on. Then I would ask the minister to explain, if he

would, in the subvote on fire management how salaries go down 10 per cent — go down 10 per cent — without any reduction in personnel?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, I want to be clear in the answer I gave earlier, that the firefighting crews were staying as is in the North. There were reductions in the South in Cypress Hills, Swift Current, and Saskatoon, and so those were aligned. So when we talk about the North, we want to be clear on that. The firefighting crews were as is in the North.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well I thank the minister for that. I don't think that was the premise of the original question; it was firefighting in the province of Saskatchewan. I don't think we had addressed the question to specifically any geographical area. So if the minister is now saying there are reductions in firefighting crews, I'm glad he said Cypress Hills. What other places in the province will see a reduction in firefighting personnel?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well I would beg to differ with the minister . . . the member opposite that when they did ask the question about the North . . . And we're very clear about giving specific answers. And so I recollect the question was about firefighting in the North. And so I responded in terms of the North.

In terms of the province we do, Environment does have firefighting capacity. Of course the needs and the impacts are a little different in the South. And so we are able to look at savings in those areas. And yet we will still have a strong fire presence in the South as well.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Well, Mr. Chair, one final question. I just want to put it . . . I can give the minister exactly what my question was and exactly what his quote was. And he said, "We have not cut back in people working on the forest fires." That was a quote. That's in *Hansard*. It doesn't say anything about any geographical area of the province.

And in fact my question today read, how can the minister say that no jobs will be lost fighting forest fires. Now I didn't say forest fires in Glentworth, Saskatchewan, because we don't have much for forest there. But that was the question. The question was, how can the minister say that no jobs will be lost fighting forest fires. And the minister's answer was very unequivocal, there will be no jobs lost.

So if the minister wants to explain to the people of this province, I'm sorry you didn't understand what I said because what I said is not really what I meant, I would like him to say that publicly.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well, Mr. Chair, we'll have to check *Hansard* when it's finished today. I stand by what I said.

But I would really urge the member opposite to be very helpful. And this is the . . . You know fighting fires in this province, whether it's grassland fires in the South or along the forest fringe — which is also a huge issue — and ones along the commercial forests, or in the Far North, this is an important issue. And tripping people up and saying this or that, I think is not very helpful. If he's really, truly wanting to get the points,

you know, I think this is very important.

The member opposite, and the members on that side, have been polishing their wit. And we've even seen articles about how they can be very witty. But there's no substance. And so here we have another example of that. Here we're arguing about this. And where's the substance over there?

And sometimes I would even worry about some of the members over there, about . . . You know when they're talking to the people over here, from the North — and they can be pretty mean-spirited about this — I have some real concerns about this, Mr. Chair.

**Mr. Huyghebaert:** — Mr. Chair, the real concerns lie with the people of this province. And now we get a flip-flop again, I'm sorry, although you do think you understand what I said. And we will check *Hansard* again tomorrow because I know what my question was to the minister; it was about firefighting jobs. And he gets up, and he wants to give a little dissertation about the members over here.

In fact he should be looking at his own department and what's going on because there was — he now admitted — there was jobs cut in the firefighting of this province. He admitted that just now. Yes, we have cut firefighting jobs. That's the first time he's actually stood in his place, or in somebody else's place, and stated that yes, we have cut firefighting jobs.

So he wants to talk about the credibility of people. How could he stand up for weeks and say, we have not cut firefighting jobs in this province and now today finally — finally — the facts come out that we have.

So, Mr. Speaker . . . or, Mr. Chair, now I'd like to ask my colleague from Carrot River Valley, who has a few questions, to come in.

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

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Whenever it seems I sit by my gracious colleague from Wood River, the tempo of the House seems to go up a notch. And I appreciate that. I appreciate that.

At any rate I know that time is relatively short, and I have a couple of questions that I would like to ask because I know that more of my colleagues have questions as well. The two issues that I want to talk about today really have taken place long before you took your position, Mr. Minister, but they're pretty critical to my area, to the Northeast of Saskatchewan.

Weyerhaeuser has been a good corporate citizen in northeast Saskatchewan, in Saskatchewan in general, for a long time. The minister will be aware that the Carrot River mill and the Hudson Bay mill are both up for sale by Weyerhaeuser. We've have the occasion to talk about that to you, Mr. Minister.

And my question to you is that, you have an opportunity to put your sign of approval, or stamp of approval, on any sale that is forthcoming with these two particular mills. And you'll have a really good opportunity to alleviate some distress amongst some of the groups from that area, those being the outfitting groups,

which by the way are a part of our prosperous economy in northeast Saskatchewan. They have some concerns with the forestry, the way it's managed.

The trappers' association is another association that you know you're going to have an opportunity to talk to and to listen to before you approve this sale.

And my question is to you — and it's a very simple one — is that would you commit to coming to northeast Saskatchewan, to Carrot River Valley, with some of your officials and talk and listen to some of these groups prior to approval on any sale from Weyerhaeuser?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Thank you. And I appreciate the question. I appreciate the opportunity too to meet with various members, such as the member from Carrot River, to talk about these issues on an ongoing basis. That's very important and very constructive.

And so we are aware of, you know, the sale and we want to make sure that the communities are supportive of that. We've had an invitation to travel up there. And of course, you know, our first responsibilities are to the House when the House is in session. So the timing will be of some importance there. But you know, we will try to communicate as much as possible and I'll try to get up there as much as I can.

I think it's very important to hear the concerns of the local people. And so my associate deputy minister's been also in contact and will be working with those people. But I appreciate the question because I think it does talk about talking to people and how an economy like that is very important, so . . .

**Mr. Kerpan:** — Thank you, Minister. I guess I would say in response to your answers that if it were to be while the House was in session and you were going, I would very much like . . . I'd go along with you to make that happen. I'm sure our House Leader and Whip would be in favour of that as well.

My next question, and I guess the last one I'm going to have the opportunity to ask today, deals with conservation officers. You know there was some talk about that a few minutes ago. But the conservation officers that I talk to — and I do run into them occasionally — felt that they were under a tremendous workload and stress prior to the cutting of the 18 positions.

Lots of times these folks would say to me that there would only be two on for a large area. And if you're familiar at all with northeast Saskatchewan, you know that it is very difficult to travel the long areas or the far distances that are required to police, if you want to call it that, — poaching and illegal hunting. So I guess that's my concern.

(16:30)

But my question really is sort of related and that being, the policy of this government has been for conservation officers to carry side arms, and then it wasn't, and then it was. And I guess my question to you is, what is the policy of the government going to be with respect to conservation officers carrying side arms?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, essentially the policy will remain as is. It was reviewed last year. Our workplace violence prevention policy was reviewed by the Department of Labour, the occupational health group, and so they found that it was appropriate. As well I have mentioned that the Saskatchewan Police College reviewed the policy and found it to be appropriate and modern and . . . thing to be in place. And so it will be there.

And I appreciate the concerns about the stress and workload. And again, that speaks to the reorganization that I think is needed and how we can meet the demands that these people do face out in the fields. It's a challenging job, and we want to be there with the resources to support them.

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

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair. To the minister and his officials, thank you for the opportunity to bring forward a couple of questions with people of my constituency.

Mr. Minister, I've written a letter to you dated May 5 regarding a constituent who has concerns about the firefighting costs. Actually the costs were involved in the fires that ran rampant in 2002 in the spring. And there's still ongoing discussions and disputes about the amount of money that was spent on the fires.

Just to give you some background and to remind you about this issue, it was in the area of the RM of Bjorkdale, and the bill that was passed on to him was 50 per cent of the costs of the actual firefighting bill. The RM of Bjorkdale informed me that this was for a by-law that they had passed before the fire season that year, and it actually is a concern that this RM finds is ongoing. Landowners have discovered that insurance does not insure against the cost of firefighting that gets out of control when it comes to brush fires.

Mr. Minister, I'm sure you're well aware that in the last few years — with the drought and the low grain prices and BSE — farmers are struggling to pay their own bills, and firefighting bills are making it nearly impossible for them to continue. And at the same time, the RM has been forced to eat a lot of the costs that were originally paid for by government. They have been downloaded on, in many aspects of their own work, and they are forced to again download onto farmers.

So one of the questions that we have is . . . The Prairie and Forest Fires Act which places the firefighting costs on the RM and is subsequently forcing them to put the costs onto the landowner, is your department reviewing this Act? Is there any opportunity that this huge burden is going to be taken away from the landowner and placed back with the department where it probably belongs?

The fire in this area was . . . much of it started on Crown land. It continued on to private land, but there was . . . the majority of the fires actually started on Crown land, and it's caused — still causing — a hardship for farmers in the Bjorkdale-Archerwill area. And is your department reviewing this Act?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in regards to this specific question, we are not at this time reviewing the Act. But what we

have is we're working with SARM to talk about a self-insurance program to help in the case of providing relief around how much . . . or the cost of fighting fires, because it is a cost. The Premier made a commitment at the SARM convention 2003. And we continue to work towards that — working with SARM and interested groups, the RMs along the forest fringe about the self-insurance program.

**Ms. Draude:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. I am sure that working towards a solution is something that's not going to gladden the hearts of too many people right now who are burdened with the cost of firefighting which was really an act of God, something that was way beyond their control and now they are forced to bear the costs of it.

There has been many constituents who have been calling, talking about the huge burden for them because of this fire season. And I believe it's something that should be looked at on an individual basis. I believe there is a different policy if the fire starts on Crown land than if it starts on an individual's land. It doesn't seem to me to be a lot . . . to be fair when a fire is caused in a year where there is a huge problem. It's burning out of control regardless of where it starts. So I think it's something that landowners need, to feel like this government understands the situation and understands it's putting a huge burden on them.

Is there something that I can be telling these people that your government is going to be doing in the near future? As you said, the Premier promised. It was something that was going to be important to your government. When we are talking about a green and prosperous economy, that must mean everyone, including the farmers. So please tell us something that is going to give us a little bit of hope.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in response to this question . . . It was interesting, at the SARM convention I had an opportunity to meet with some of the councillors from the RM of Bjorkdale. And so I wouldn't even mind letting the member opposite know when I'll be up there, and we could talk about this at the same time.

But again, I mentioned at that time — and that was back in early March — I wouldn't be up there until summer or fall to talk about this particular issue. And I heard what they had to say and we, you know . . . It is a cost. It's a huge cost, and it's a burden. But we have extended the cap to \$300,000 for fighting fires for our part of the bill or the lesser of 5.67 mills or \$300,000. So I think that's some help there. As well what we're trying to do is help in terms of their capacity to fight fires themselves either through training, equipment, and exchanging information such as the weather.

Another part I would like to profile — and I think that this is important — is we've engaged on a pretty rigorous fire prevention program. And it's had some impact last year where it's reduced fires that were started by people by some 20 per cent, and we're doing that again this year. And it's important because if the fire's not started, it's an easier fire to deal with. And so we're really going to push that because that's a good program. And so I think I'll leave that with you then.

**The Deputy Chair:** — I recognize the member from

Kindersley.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Vice-Chair. Thank you to the minister and your officials for being here today.

First question that I have has to do with the SERM (Saskatchewan Environment and Resource Management) conservation officers and the geographical boundaries of the Kindersley constituency. Could the minister outline for me how many officers are going to serve this area and where they're going to be stationed?

And just to give you . . . Perhaps to help your officials, we're talking from the South Saskatchewan River north to Unity, and it's about a hundred and . . . around 200 kilometres wide more or less in the north-south path.

(16:45)

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, I don't have a constituency map with me, but I believe the answer is one.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Minister. One conservation officer for this large area causes me grave concern. I know from farming that we have a number of wildlife herds. And recently over the last five years, we've had new wildlife which we've never had before, specifically in the moose population. And I have serious concerns that for poaching and whatnot, one conservation officer is not going to be sufficient for either hunter safety or protecting the wildlife and monitoring wildlife.

I'd go on to ask if the . . . As I understand it, the conservation officers — two of them — were pink-slipped from the town of Leader, which serves north of the river as well, although it's in the Cypress Hills riding. The loss of these two jobs represents 1 per cent of the town's population leaving. And more serious than just what that does to the economic climate is that these were conservation officers responsible for the Great Sand Hills. This is the most environmentally fragile ecosystem in the province. I believe it has a species of kangaroo rat which exists nowhere else in the world. And further to that, it also has a situation with increased natural gas and oil development in the area.

How does the minister expect that monitoring of this area is going to allow for the ecosystem of the Great Sand Hills to be retained and sustained for future generations?

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Mr. Chair, in response to the question, and I appreciated how the member opposite expanded it to the Southwest so I'll talk about the Southwest. Clearly he was moving beyond his boundaries of his own constituency.

So in the Southwest we have six environmental protection officers who are working with areas such as oil and gas and those kind of concerns. We have 17 conservation officers in the Southwest. We have a specialized enforcement unit that will be working with emerging issues. And so we feel that again it's based on our risk analysis. What are the priorities in the Southwest? And we'll be able to meet those concerns head-on.

And I think there'll be quite a presence. We're aware of the special needs in the Southwest, and they're real and we value

them, and the whole province values them. But I think when you have six environmental protection officers, that says an awful lot about what we do out there; and 17 conservation officers — again, a real presence.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — I thank the minister for his answer and I'd like the minister to elaborate. The minister in his preamble spoke about the need for a green and prosperous economy and while that was most enlightening, the aspects that I missed of it are, what percentage growth to GDP (gross domestic product) do you forecast for this year coming specifically out of that green aspect? Or if it would be simpler for the minister, he could put it in terms of monetary in the millions or billions of dollars. Thanks.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well it's a very interesting question that the member opposite poses and one that I often think about a lot. How do we measure progress in terms of sustainability in growth and wealth of a province, or of a people? And I think this is an important debate to have, an important discussion to have. I think that it's interesting — not only do we talk about it here in Saskatchewan; I know the Government of Alberta has even talked about it with their Pembina report on how do we measure wealth.

And I would even ask the member opposite . . . I've been doing some reading, David Suzuki's paper on . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, a very interesting paper . . . How do we have sustainability into the future? And he talks about genuine wealth indicators.

And I think this is very important. How does a society . . . what's the true measure of wealth or success of a community? And I think this is something that we're going to be talking about as we begin this dialogue on a green strategy or green and prosperous economy.

Right now though, I would ask the member to take a look at our performance plan. We do talk about specific measures, and I think some of the most impressive measures are what we've done around waste management and some of the incredible things that the people of this province are doing — very good stuff.

And I think that there's all sorts of different ways we can measure this, and I look forward to continuing this discussion in the next while.

**Mr. Dearborn:** — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I know how wealth is measured and it's in the common denomination of dollars. And any financial report from any corporation, any *Globe and Mail* issue on the day will collaborate exactly that fact. So what I'm . . . I'm somewhat bewildered on the answer.

I'd ask one final question of the minister, in that our time is running short. The minister said today in his remarks that we had great excitement in the new economy around hydrogen fuel. And I'm just wondering if the minister is capable of naming one company in the province that's currently working with this fuel type, and possibly where they're located.

**Hon. Mr. Forbes:** — Well I appreciate the question because it's something that we find very interesting. It's an important

one. The people who are doing this is the Solar Hydrogen Energy Corporation. I believe they're based out of Saskatoon. There's seven or eight people working on this. I understand there's a demonstration project over at the U of R.

But what I would like . . . As we're getting close, I would challenge the member opposite on how he talks about measuring wealth or health of a society. This is a very interesting thing that you can only measure it in dollars. I think there is much more to a society than just the measurement of dollars.

We have to have wealth, that's for sure. But there's the health, the well-being of the community and this is very important. Issues about being safe in your community. There's a whole range of things that we're doing on this side. I think this speaks to why we're over here and they're over there. They need to get the bigger picture of how a healthy community moves forward and reflects on its own goals, what it's all about. And I think this is very important.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I finish up — or, Mr. Chair, as I finish up, I appreciate the questions that were offered here today and I think that they've been most insightful and we'll probably meet again, so.

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

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

**The Deputy Chair:** — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that the committee report progress and ask for leave to sit again. Is it agreed?

**Some Hon. Members:** — Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** — Carried.

(17:00)

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

**Mr. Iwanchuk:** — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the committee to report progress and ask for leave to sit again.

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

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

**The Speaker:** — It now being past the hour of 5 o'clock, this House stands recessed until 7 p.m.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.

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