



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

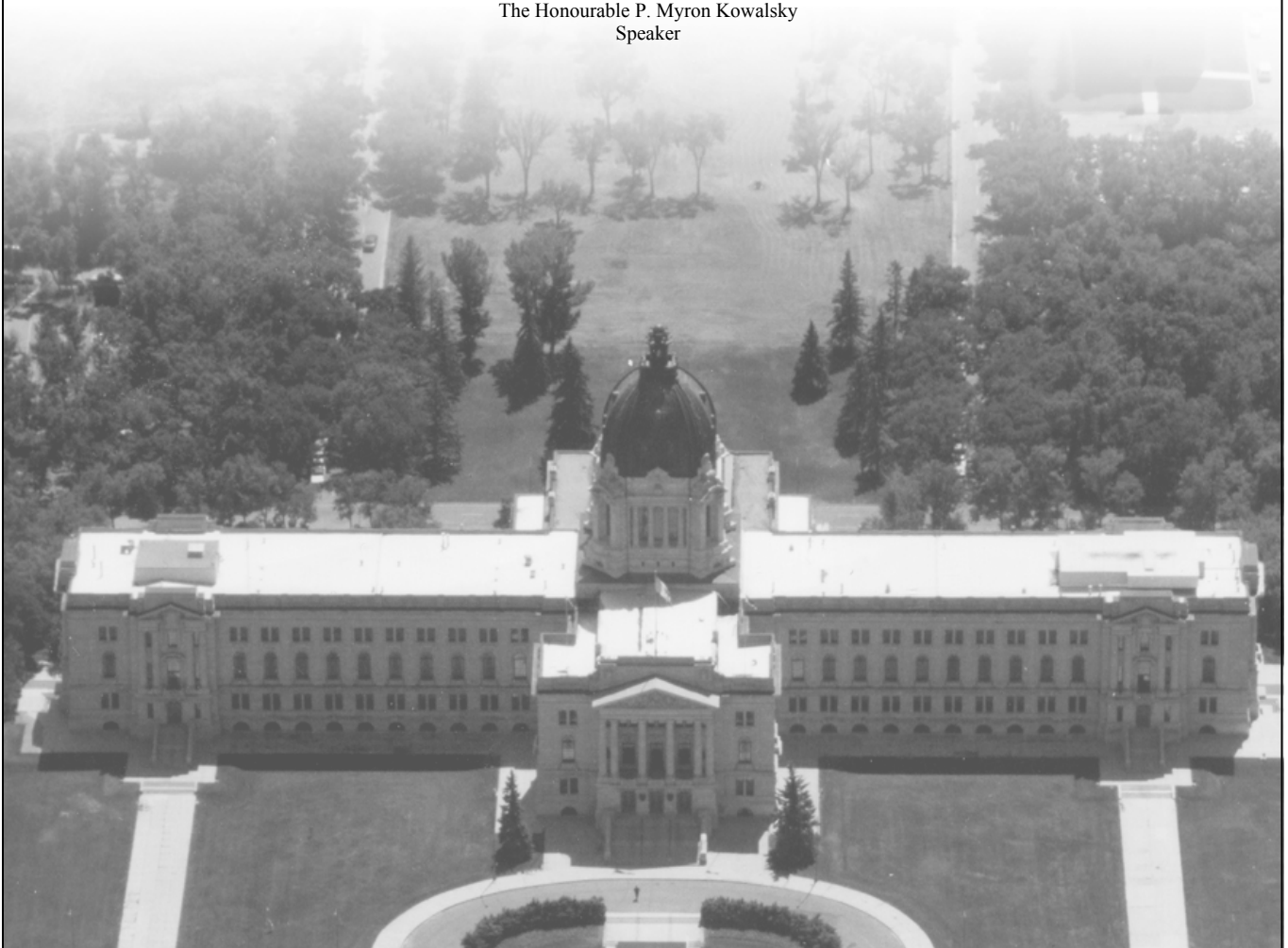
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**DEBATES
and
PROCEEDINGS**

(HANSARD)

Published under the
authority of

The Honourable P. Myron Kowalsky
Speaker



MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF SASKATCHEWAN

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

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

The Assembly met at 13:30.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Mr. Speaker, this afternoon it's my pleasure to present a petition regarding Crown leaseholders in the province of Saskatchewan. And I read the prayer at this time. The prayer reads:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the petition I present today comes from the communities of Gull Lake, Shaunavon, Herbert, Abbey, Eastend, Hodgeville, Maple Creek, Rush Lake, and Pennant.

I so present. Thank you.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I have hundreds and hundreds of names on petitions that were gathered at a public meeting last night in the community of Gull Lake. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitions will ever pray.

I so present, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today also to present a petition dealing with health care. It's one of the major concerns that we have throughout the province. And, Mr. Speaker, I again read the petition and the prayer:

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

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

This, Mr. Speaker, is signed by people from the communities of Major and Kerrobert.

I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased to stand today with members of my caucus on behalf of people from Kerrobert, who are fearing for the future of their hospital. The prayer reads:

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

The people that have signed this petition are from Luseland, Major, Cactus Lake.

I so present.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm joining with colleagues in presenting petitions regarding health care services at the Kerrobert Hospital. Mr. Speaker, the Kerrobert Hospital provides vital health care services for residents in the surrounding area, and the petition notes that the Premier previously promised that further facility closures were not part of his health care plan. The prayer of this petition 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 Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, there are a number of signatures on this petition and they are from the communities of Kerrobert, Major, Cactus Lake, Luseland, and Provost, Alberta. And I'm pleased to present this petition on behalf of the signators.

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, in spite of the fact that the Premier said nothing about such closures during the election campaign. And the prayer reads:

Wherefore . . .

The Speaker: — Order, order. The member should . . . Order, order. The member should keep his remarks quite straightforward without entering into debate during petitions.

I recognize the member for Thunder Creek.

Mr. Stewart: — And the prayer reads, Mr. Speaker:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take

the necessary action to ensure that the Craik Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Craik, Bethune, and Regina.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of citizens of Luseland I'm pleased to be able to present this petition. These people are concerned about the long-term care and acute care services at the Kerrobert Hospital. The prayer reads:

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

And in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

I do present on behalf of the signatures from Luseland.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise on behalf of citizens of Luseland and Salvador who are concerned about their long-term health facility that they use at the Kerrobert Hospital. Mr. Speaker, I will read the prayer:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by citizens from Luseland and Salvador.

And I so present, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a petition to present regarding long-term and acute care services in the Kerrobert Hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

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

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

The petition is signed by people from the Battleford, Luseland, and Denzil area, I believe.

I so present.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, again today I stand to present a petition on behalf of people from my constituency very concerned about the future of health care in this province. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the 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 Radville.

I so present. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well with my colleagues on behalf of citizens concerned about health care in Saskatchewan and in particular long-term and acute care services at the Kerrobert Hospital. The prayer reads as follows:

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

And as in duty bound, your petitioners ever pray.

Signatures on this petition this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, are all from the community of Luseland, and I'm pleased to present on their behalf.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member from Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to stand today to present a petition to keep long-term care and acute care services in the Kerrobert Hospital. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this particular petition are from the communities of Major and Kerrobert.

I so present.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise today to

present a petition along with my colleagues on behalf of the people from the Kerrobert area who are very concerned about the possible closure of their hospital or downsizing. 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 Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Doddsland and Plenty.

I so present.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With pleasure I rise today to present a petition along with my colleagues for the widespread concern that the government will close health care facilities. I would like to present the following petition on behalf of the great people of Kerrobert. And the prayer reads:

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

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

I so present.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise with a petition from citizens that are very concerned about the possible reductions in long-term care beds and medical services in the rural areas of Saskatchewan. 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 Kerrobert Hospital 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 Luseland.

I so present.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in the Assembly today to bring forth a petition signed by citizens of Saskatchewan that are concerned with health care in rural Saskatchewan. 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 Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Mr. Speaker, the signatures on this petition are all from the centre of Kerrobert.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition to present from citizens that would like to keep long-term and acute care services at their hospital in Kerrobert. 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 Kerrobert Hospital is not closed or further downsized.

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

Signed by the good citizens of Doddsland and Kerrobert and district.

I so present.

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too rise in my place today to present a petition on behalf of residents in Kerrobert and Kerrobert area who are concerned about the long-term and acute care services at the Kerrobert Hospital. And the prayer reads as follows:

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I present on behalf of signators from Kerrobert, Major, and Macklin.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise again today in the Assembly and present a petition on behalf of residents of west central Saskatchewan who are concerned with the state of health care and possible health care closures or reductions. The prayer reads as follows, Mr. Speaker:

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

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

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

I so present.

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

Mr. Hart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm certainly pleased to be able to rise and present petitions on behalf of citizens concerned with health care. The prayer reads as follows:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

And signatures to this petition, Mr. Speaker, come from the communities of Kerrobert, Doddsland, Tramping Lake, Cactus Lake, and Luseland.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise for the citizens of Kerrobert on health care. And their prayer reads as follows:

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

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

And the signatures are from Major and Kerrobert.

I so present.

(13:45)

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 bulk beer discounts;

Another petition concerning Wadena Hospital;

A petition concerning the sale and use of tobacco products;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper nos. 48, 157, 156 and 166.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Clerk: — Mr. Yates, as Chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills, presents the second report of the said committee which is as follows:

Your committee has considered the following Bills and has agreed to report the same without amendment:

Bill No. 301, The Bethany College Amendment Act, 2004;
Bill No. 302, The Fountain of Life School of Ministry Inc. Act;
Bill No. 303, The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association Amendment Act, 2004;

And further, that the fees be remitted to the petitioners less the cost of printing for Bills 301, 302, and 303.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney, the Chair for the Committee on Private Bills.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move, seconded by the member from Carrot River Valley, that the second report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in and the said Bills be accordingly referred to the Committee of the Whole.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Regina Dewdney and seconded by the member for Carrot River Valley that the second report of the Standing Committee on Private Bills be now concurred in and that the said Bills be accordingly referred to the Committee of the Whole. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried and the Bills are now referred to Committee of the Whole.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee of Crown and Central Agencies.

Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies to report Bill No. 12, The Purchasing Act without amendment.

The Speaker: — And when shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole?

I recognize the Minister of SPMC (Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation).

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive

consideration in Committee of the Whole on this particular Bill. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted.

When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 12 — The Purchasing Act, 2004

Hon. Ms. Higgins: — I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — Moved by the Minister for SPMC that the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on Economy to report Bill No. 3, The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole of Bill No. 3. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? Minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 3 — The Certified Management Consultants Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 3 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 4, The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has requested leave to waive consideration on Committee of the Whole on Bill 4. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time? I recognize the minister.

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 4 — The Municipal Employees' Pension Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 4 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its

title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Standing Committee on Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill 5, The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole on Bill 5. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall this Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 5 — The Saskatchewan Pension Annuity Fund
Amendment Act, 2004**

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 5 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Committee on the Economy.

**PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING
AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES**

Standing Committee on Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 6, The Superannuation (Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — And when shall this Bill be considered in Committee of the Whole? I recognize the minister.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has requested leave to waive consideration on Committee of the Whole on Bill No. 6. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. When shall the Bill be read a third time?

THIRD READINGS

**Bill No. 6 — The Superannuation
(Supplementary Provisions) Amendment Act, 2004**

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move this Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that this Bill now be read a third time and passed under its title. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Third reading of this Bill.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a third time and passed under its title.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Moosomin.

Mr. Toth: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Premier: can the Premier please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in Executive Council in the year 2004? And as well, please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have as well two other questions asking the similar questions regarding severance and compensation for the years 2003, 2002.

I so present.

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Information Technology minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a

severance package in your department in the year 2004?
And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have a similar question for the Information Technology minister for the year 2003.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Gaming Corporation minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions directed to the Gaming Corporation minister for years 2003, 2002.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

And this, Mr. Speaker, is to the Seniors minister, and the question is: can the minister please provide the names of those who received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount for each person.

I also have another question directed also to the Seniors minister, and this asks the minister to provide those particular names for the year 2003, and also the compensation package for each person.

I have another question also directed to the Seniors minister asking for the minister to provide the names of those who have received a severance package in the minister's department in the year 2004, and asking for them to provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I have another question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

And this, Mr. Speaker, is directed to the minister responsible for Health, and the question is: will the proposed legislation banning smoking in public places be applicable to and enforced on Saskatchewan reserves?

I so present.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Aboriginal Affairs: can the minister please provide the names of those who've received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each.

I have a similar question for the year 2003 and for the year 2002.

And, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I'll also ask . . . I give notice I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of the Status of Women: can the minister please provide the names of those who've received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

I have a similar question for the year 2003 and the year 2002. Thank you.

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that on day no. 43 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Government Relations minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the minister for the years 2003 and 2002.

And while I am on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

This time to the Minister Responsible for SPMC, and the question is: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And, Mr. Speaker, again I have similar questions for the year 2003 and 2002. Thank you.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following questions:

To the Agriculture minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions regarding severance and compensation for the years 2003 and 2002.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Industry and Resources minister: can the minister

please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

I have a similar question for the year 2003 and the year 2002.

And in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, I have an additional question that I shall on day 43 ask the government this question:

And this one to the Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission: can the minister provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

With a similar question for the year 2003 and the year 2002.

I so present.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, I have three questions today dealing with severance packages. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Justice: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have the same question for the year 2003. And, Mr. Speaker, I have the same question again for the year 2002. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question, rather a unique question:

To the Minister of Learning: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given to each person.

I, as well, have questions for the year 2002, 2003, as well as 2004.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister of Sask Water: can the minister please provide the names of those who received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And, Mr. Speaker, I also ask that same minister the same questions for the year 2003 and 2002. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: can the minister please provide the criteria that the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Authority uses to award units of physiotherapy service contracts with privately operated physiotherapy clinics? And is this criteria consistent with how other health authorities award physiotherapy service contracts?

(14:00)

I also have a question to the minister, a further question: how many private physiotherapy clinics applied for service contracts with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District in the new term beginning April 1, 2004? And how many received contracts?

Again to the Minister of Health: who assesses private physiotherapy clinics who have applied for service contracts with the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District to determine if they meet all of the eligibility requirements?

And also to the Minister of Health: if a private physiotherapy clinic has applied for a service contract and does not meet the eligibility requirements of the Regina Qu'Appelle Health District, is the operator notified as to the deficiencies of the clinic so they may improve their eligibility status in subsequent years?

Further question to the Minister of Health: what are the eligibility requirements for pre-authorization of out-of-province medical treatment?

And a further, to the Minister of Health: is there a formal appeal process for people who have been denied pre-authorization out-of-province medical treatment? And if so, what is the process?

And further, to the Minister of Health: can the minister please provide the names of those who received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given to each person. And further questions for the years 2003 and 2004.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation: can the minister please provide the names of those that have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the years 2003 and 2004.

And while I'm on my feet, I also shall give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for Highways and Transportation: for the fiscal year 1999 to 2000, what was the total number of appeal applications made to the Highway Traffic Board? And of that number, how many were approved? How many were rejected? And how many of the approved applications resulted in a successful appeal?

And, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the fiscal year 2000-2001, for the fiscal year 2001 to 2002, and for the fiscal year 2002 to 2003, and 2003 to 2004.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for the Provincial Secretary: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

I have a similar question for the year 2003-2004.

Further to that, Mr. Speaker, I have a question. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Community Resources and Employment minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And a similar question for the year 2003-2004.

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

Mr. Cheveldayoff: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the minister responsible for post-secondary education: can the minister provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

I also have questions for the years 2003 and 2004. Thank you.

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

Mr. Huyghebaert: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following

question:

To the Environment minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2002? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have a similar question for the year 2003 and also for the year 2004.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Energy Conservation minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amounts given for each person.

And I have a similar question for the fiscal year 2003.

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

Mr. Allchurch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Northern Affairs minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given to each person.

And, Mr. Speaker, I have similar questions for the year 2003 and 2002. Thank you.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Liquor and Gaming minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And I have the same question for 2003 and 2002.

And also while I'm on my feet, Mr. Speaker, I give notice I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Immigration minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

And also the same question for 2003.

I so present.

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

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Corrections and Public Safety minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I also have similar questions to the same minister for the years back to and including 2003 and 2002.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Culture, Youth and Recreation minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, I have a similar question for the year 2003 and for the year 2002.

And while I'm on my feet, Mr. Minister, I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the Labour minister: can the minister provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department in the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

Mr. Speaker, there are similar questions for the years 2003 and 2002.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Batoche.

Mr. Kirsch: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 43 ask the government the following question:

To the forestry minister: can the minister please provide the names of those who have received a severance package in your department for the year 2004? And please provide the compensation package amount given for each person.

I also have a similar question for year 2003 and 2002.

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly, a delegation from the community of Gull Lake and some of the

surrounding RMs (rural municipality). They're individuals that have come here to watch the proceedings of question period and possibly to have some of their questions answered as well.

They include Mr. Jerry Peterson, the mayor of the community of Gull Lake; Mr. Doug Steele from the RM of Gull Lake; Les Potter, the reeve of the RM of Gull Lake; Bjarne Stusrud from the RM of Gull Lake; Mr. Howard Wedrick, the reeve of the RM of Carmichael; Darcy Kettner, also from the RM of Carmichael; Dennis Fiddler the reeve of the RM of Webb; and Murray Benjamin with the RM of Webb who is a councillor; and finally Dr. Clare Kozroski, a physician in the community of Gull Lake. I'd like you to welcome them to the Assembly today, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you, I'd like to introduce to you, seated in your gallery, a delegation from the west central health group. The west central health group represents 4,175 people in the towns of Kerrobert and Luseland, the villages of Dodsland, Smiley, Major, Tramping Lake, and Plenty, and the RMs of Progress, Winslow, Prairiedale, Heart's Hill, Mariposa, Oakdale, Milton, and Antelope Park.

Today we have in the delegation Mr. Len Schlosser — he is the mayor of Luseland — Iain Fischer, the deputy reeve of Progress. Bill Worth, Sparky, Chair of Dodsland-Plenty Clinic and Health Foundation, Mr. Richard Anderson, the Co-Chair of the KLD Wellness Foundation, Fran Babiuk, boardsperson of the Dodsland-Plenty Health Clinic Foundation, Gary Smith, the deputy mayor of Kerrobert, and Maureen Applin— she's the economic development officer for the town of Kerrobert and the town of Luseland.

And I welcome them to their legislature, and ask all members to do the same.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly, Gordon Petruic, who is in the west gallery. Mr. Petruic is a technical producer for the John Gormley show, and I met him this morning when I was appearing on that program this morning to speak about our safer communities and neighbourhoods legislation.

I have learned that Mr. Petruic, who is also a political science studies student at the University of Regina, is an avid follower of the proceedings in this House on the legislative channel, and I invited him down to watch us live this afternoon. I hope that everybody will greet him and welcome him here.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — I would like to introduce to you and through you, 62 students seated in the gallery and on the floor. These students are from the Langham Elementary School. And, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to mention the teachers that have come with the students. They are Mr. Yellowlees, Mrs. Kasahoff, Mr. Kolach, and Mrs. Buswell, and many other parents. I look forward to meeting with these students later and getting a photo and having a visit.

So please join me in welcoming these students to the legislature from Langham.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to see in the Speaker's gallery today two distinguished gentlemen who are very involved with the education system in this province, Mr. Dick Neiman who is with LEADS (League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents), and Mr. Paul Baskey with SASBO (Saskatchewan Association of School Business Officials).

I appreciate very much the fact that they have come into the gallery today, and I appreciate very much their attendance this morning at the historic announcement that we made at Balgonie School regarding school board restructuring. I have appreciated their advice and their input and their support, and I want to welcome them here to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, at the risk of wanting to correct the Learning minister, the gentleman in the gallery is Dick Neiman and Norman Dray, and they were at the announcement earlier in the day. Mr. Dray is a constituent of mine and I'm pleased to welcome him to our legislature. Mr. Neiman had a long career with the Saskatoon Catholic School Board. And I would ask all members to welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker. Before everyone stands up to correct me, I too would like to correct my statement, and of course, welcome the members again. It doesn't change the distinction of these gentlemen nor their ongoing involvement and support. And at least, you know, I'm always pleased at least if we're batting 500 in the Assembly. So again, I appreciate them for coming today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

Regina Rescue Mission Fundraiser

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night I had the privilege of attending Regina Rescue Mission's First Annual "Love Your Neighbour" fund raising banquet.

The event was a huge success with over 400 people in attendance to help raise funds in support of the programs and services offered by the Regina Rescue Mission.

The Regina Rescue Mission was founded in 1999 by Rev. Ken and Michelle Porter. Since then they have provided healing and hope to the addicted, the homeless, and others in need, both at the Scarth Street shelter and now at their new LifeChange centre on 8th Avenue — both of which are located in Regina Elphinstone-Centre.

The mission has helped thousands with food, shelter, clothing, personal counselling, and addictions recovery. Keynote speakers for the banquet were Danny and Alison Barrett. Their words were powerful and their generous commitment to free speech was admirable.

A definite highlight of last night's proceedings was the graduation of five men from the Mission's LifeChange recovery program. As its name implies, Mr. Speaker, the program helps individuals make fundamental changes in their lives, guiding them on to a path of spiritual growth and providing them with practical life and job skills. I congratulate the five graduates from the LifeChange recovery program for their perseverance, bravery, hard work, and achievement.

(14:15)

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the sponsors of last night's event and everyone who attended for their support of the worthy and important work carried on by the Regina Rescue Mission. And I particularly want to commend the staff and volunteers of the Regina Rescue Mission, particularly Ken and Michelle Porter, for the way that they live up to the challenge of Luke 10:27 of loving thy neighbour as thyself. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Efforts of SaskPower Employees During Snowstorm

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's no secret that we've been praying for moisture down in the southern part of the province, but the weather over the past couple of days had more than a few people looking up at the heavens and wondering what was happening. It certainly wasn't what we were expecting, Mr. Speaker, and it did seem a little bit late in the year. But this being Saskatchewan, and given that the last few years have been extremely dry, we'll take moisture in any form we can get it.

Now while some members of the House can honestly say that they haven't seen one drop of moisture in their constituencies over the past couple of days, I'd like to inform all members that the Estevan area got more than its fair share. The storm, a Colorado low as Environment Canada called it, dumped nearly

30 centimetres of precipitation in the area, most of it in the form of snow, sleet, and freezing rain.

Now when you factor in all this moisture, and add in a fairly strong wind, Mr. Speaker, it's no surprise that some power lines went down in our community starting early Tuesday morning and continuing throughout the day. But thanks to the tireless efforts of dedicated SaskPower crews, most of the lines were back up and operating as soon as possible — with the last reconnect being done this morning — restoring power for residential customers in the southern part of the province.

On behalf of my constituents in and around the Estevan area, I'd like to send a big and heartfelt thanks to all SaskPower men and women who worked so hard over the past couple days and nights to see power re-established in the area with a minimal amount of disruption and inconvenience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Meewasin-Saskatoon Credit Union Clean-Up Campaign

Mr. Iwanchuk: — Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank residents of Saskatoon and their community partners for participating in the annual Meewasin-Saskatoon Credit Union Clean-Up Campaign.

For the last 22 years, thousands of community-minded residents have joined together to show their pride in keeping our city beautiful by cleaning away winter debris along the river valley, in neighbourhood parks, schoolyards, and along our city streets and boulevards. Last year more than 17,000 people registered for this valuable community initiative.

This year the campaign was officially kicked off at St. John's Elementary School. It began on Earth Day, April 22, and will run to May 31.

As part of the campaign, volunteers from the Saskatoon running community, including Saskatoon Road Runners and the Brainsport Running Club, wearing their signature blue jackets, recently joined in and cleared away litter along the east side of Meewasin Valley Trail, between the Victoria bridge and University bridge.

These athletes, who could be seen running alone along the trail or in groups, especially on Wednesdays, Wednesday nights for the Brainsport group run, indicated that as regular users of the Meewasin Trail they felt a responsibility to help clean it up.

I congratulate the Meewasin Valley Authority, the Saskatoon Credit Union, students and staff from St. John's Elementary School, and all community volunteers for participating in Saskatoon's annual Clean-Up Campaign. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Moose Jaw Girl Winner at Optimist International Oratorical Competition

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend, Jada Walchuk, a grade 10 student at Vanier Collegiate in Moose Jaw, competed in and won the Optimist International Oratorical Competition held in Sheridan, Wyoming. She competed against others from Alberta, Saskatchewan, Montana, and Wyoming.

Jada was sponsored by the Optimist Club of Moose Jaw, and she's the first and only winner from Moose Jaw ever since the beginning of this contest some 50 years ago.

This year's topic was: Thinking, Working, and Expecting the Best. Along with this accomplishment, Jada received a \$1,500 scholarship in US (United States) funds to further her education. Jada first won the regional competition which was held in Regina before going on to Sheridan to win the district.

Jada was diagnosed at the age of eight months with cerebral palsy and much of her speech was centred around her struggles with that terrible disease. Jada's topic, Thinking, Working, and Expecting the Best, truly reflects her attitude toward life.

I hope that Jada will complete her education in Saskatchewan and find a way to stay and contribute to this great province under a new government that encourages thinking and working, and allows young people to expect the best right here at home.

Congratulations to Jada. And thanks to the Moose Jaw Optimist Club for sending Jada and her parents, Rob and Cheryl, to Sheridan, Wyoming to take advantage of this great opportunity.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Women Entrepreneurs Week

Ms. Hamilton: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this is Women Entrepreneurs Week in Saskatchewan. This week has been set aside to recognize the significant contribution made by women to the provincial economy.

Women are a force in business. In 2003 over 33 per cent of all Saskatchewan businesses were owned and operated by women. Women entrepreneurs are one of the reasons that our provincial economy is experiencing some of the strongest growth in the nation.

Saskatchewan women are quickly becoming success stories in the business world. Women like Shannon Stewart of Curves in Regina, Joyce Liebrich of the Dollar Store with More in Prince Albert, and Rhoda O'Malley of Step Ahead Shoes Inc. in Saskatoon.

The non-profit organization Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan plays an important role in nurturing women who are considering or currently operating a business in Saskatchewan. I urge everybody to take a look at the Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan's Web site for a list of more award-winning businesses owned and operated by women.

To date, Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan has provided about \$8 million in loans to Saskatchewan businesswomen. These loans have helped create or maintain over 500 full-time jobs in the province.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members to join me in celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit of Saskatchewan's women. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Youth Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday, May 1, I had the pleasure to attend the Youth Business Excellence Awards held at the Perdue complex.

The program spearheaded by Mid Sask CFDC/REDA encourages young entrepreneurs to develop business and marketing plans for business. Entries ranging from hand-painted fishing hooks, to doughnut franchises, to hunting lodges were impressive, as was the number, quality, hard work, and foresight put into each of the projects.

Although entries from business proposals were developed by students from a number of schools, I have not the time to mention all the entries. However I would like to mention those from Perdue that took part and did an excellent job on their respective projects: Justine Hunter, Jaselyn Boucher, Justine Cleghorn, Halie Anderson, Tessa Bell, Riley Saretzky, Mark Coben, Ryan Panamaroff, Connor Hoffman, Katlyn Anderson, Charity Lewis, Kyle Reinelf, Michael Seltzer, Rachel Fyson, Jolene Lammers, Drew Magensen, Jenel Anderson, Terrilyn Burwell, Claire Weir, Keegan Urick, Courtney Fenrich, Paul Herrem, Allison Jalbert, and Clayton Robertson.

I would like to congratulate these and the other students that entered their business proposals. It is encouraging to see these very bright minds looking to meet the challenges of the business world.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Laureus World Sports Award Recipient

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, the Laureus World Sports Awards are considered the premier honours in the international sporting scene, and are unique in that they recognize the world's best athletes for their achievements across all sports and all countries.

A Saskatchewan sprinter was recently named Sportsperson of the Year in the disabled athletes category at the annual Laureus World Sports ceremony in Portugal. These awards are selected by 400 sports journalists from 70 countries.

Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan native Earle Connor is a leg amputee sprinter who won over fellow athletes from Nigeria, South Africa, Sweden, Germany, and Britain to take home this

prestigious title.

Last year Mr. Connor had a stunning summer on the track, setting world records in four events. He broke the 100-metre, the 200-metre, and the 400-metre world records all on the same day in Germany. And just six days later in Milan he lowered his own 200-metre record to 26.4 seconds.

Winning this award ranks Mr. Connor with Formula 1 driver Michael Schumacher and professional golfer Annika Sorenstam who were also honoured with this award. All three are the best in the world at their sport.

I am sure my colleagues will join me in acknowledging Mr. Connor's hard work, commitment and dedication. And in congratulating him, his mom, Diane Connor of Lafleche, Saskatchewan and his grandma, Doreen McDonald of Watson, on his outstanding accomplishments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

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

Property Tax Relief

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. The Premier campaigned last fall on a platform of phoney promises — promises that included property tax relief immediately. The Premier then went this spring to SARM (Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities) convention and said the status quo is not on.

Today Saskatchewan families and property owners all over the province have learnt one more thing. They cannot trust this Premier's word. Mr. Speaker, the Premier has no intention of dealing with property tax relief this year, next year, or possibly the year after.

The Speaker: — Order please. I would ask the member to phrase his question in a way that it doesn't question the motives or the integrity of any other member in the legislature.

I recognize — order, order, order please — the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, that's pretty tough to do, but the Premier had no intention of . . .

The Speaker: — I would remind the member that Speaker's rulings are not to be commented upon. Once again, I recognize the member for Indian Head-Milestone.

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, in the announcement today we saw absolutely no commitment to reducing property tax burden on Saskatchewan landowners any time in the near future. Why would the Premier campaign on one thing, promising property tax relief, and now in the announcement today do something totally different?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, we went to the people of Saskatchewan in November with a campaign that we would make Saskatchewan ready for its next generation. Mr. Speaker, today — this day — the Minister of Learning and our government have taken a bold step forward for change, Mr. Speaker, a bold step forward to ensure quality education, K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12), for the future generations of Saskatchewan children. That's what we're doing today, Mr. Speaker.

And I find it interesting; it's about 60 years ago that the government of that time took a similar bold step to form the larger school divisions in Saskatchewan to ensure quality education for this past century. Mr. Speaker, we're taking that kind of bold step forward today. We are making this province ready for its next century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, there's one huge difference between 60 years ago and today. Tommy Douglas kept his promise.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the NDP (New Democratic Party) promised . . . the NDP's announcement today talks about school boards' forced amalgamation, and that may not be complete until the year 2007. The minister also talked about property tax relief, and that would be dependent on the federal equalization formula.

Mr. Speaker, why is the Premier using forced amalgamation and the equalization formula to try and gloss over promises that he made, that he knows he made, in the last provincial election?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, another change — in 1944 there was a credible opposition in Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, we are taking this bold step forward, this bold initiative of change to bring about a circumstance of fairness and equity for the people of Saskatchewan wherever they live. To put in place — under this bold initiative — to put in place the platform on which we can invest new provincial resources to begin that important shift off of the property tax base, Mr. Speaker.

I have made it very clear in the public, at SARM, in this legislature, that this problem that we're addressing didn't get here overnight, and it won't be solved overnight. It will be solved by careful planning, by careful work with our partners, and it will be solved on the principle that our goal is build quality education for Saskatchewan young people, our goal — to make this province ready for the next century.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's interesting to hear the Premier talk about the opposition when he clings to power by his very fingertips, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, but should I remind the Premier what he had to say last fall. Mr. Speaker, the Premier said last October in a campaign stop in Yorkton, he said the NDP platform, and I quote:

. . . provides . . . room to receive the recommendations of the Boughen Commission on funding of education.

(14:30)

But, Mr. Speaker, today we hear the minister of Education talking nothing about the Boughen Commission, nothing about the funding of education and the burden that has placed on property tax owners all over this province, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, property tax reform needs to be addressed and needs to be addressed today — not two years down the road, not three years down the road, not even four years down the road, Mr. Speaker, and not when the federal government gets around to dealing with the equalization formula. Property tax needs to be addressed today. Will you stand up and address your promises during the last election?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting opposition that we have in this legislature because on a daily basis they walk into this House and say we should spend more money on virtually every subject.

Now it's an interesting opposition who would lobby this government hard, lobby this government hard on a daily basis not to put the provincial sales tax on restaurant meals. They lobbied us hard every day of the session until the budget. Now they want us to do just that, apparently. They want us to do just that — to take that recommendation from the Boughen report, put the tax on the restaurant meals and apply it to education.

Meanwhile they also say we need to put significant more resources into health care, significant more resources into the university, significant more resources into the highways, and they say we should lower the taxes and balance the budget. Mr. Speaker, it is not a credible opposition.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the Premier promised immediate property tax relief last fall during the election. He also told SARM that the status quo was not on. Well today, Mr.

Speaker, we found out the status quo is on.

Last May they struck the commission, the Boughen Commission, to deal with education funding. Since that point, and specially through the announcement today, the minister stands and points his fingers at school boards saying, they've got to amalgamate and stands and points his finger at Ottawa and say, they've got to come through with money.

The one person he isn't pointing his finger at is himself. He's the one that made the promises for property tax relief. He's the one that's broke the promises for property tax relief. When will he stand in his position and live up to the promises he made last September?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Learning is part of a government that in this budget put 18 million new dollars into K to 12 education . . .

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — And 10 million new dollars into revenue sharing. That's a government that's doing something about property tax in this province, and we're seeing municipalities across the province being able to hold property tax increases this year.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the members of this House precisely what it is that I said to the delegates of SARM in 2003. I'm going to quote directly from that, from that speech. Quote:

(Therefore) Our priority in tax reform for government over the next several years must be the matter of the funding of education.

While it is not easy, and while the solutions will not be simple, and let no one suggest the solutions are simple, I say to you this morning that the status quo is not on.

Well, Mr. Speaker, the status quo is not on. This government today is taking a bold step forward for the reform of education to bring fairness and equity into the system, and to build that platform on which we may invest in K to 12 education and lift some of that burden off the property tax base.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Future of Kerrobert Hospital

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, the west central health group out of the Kerrobert area are here today to let the Minister of Health know they do not want the Kerrobert Hospital to be the target of the NDP's upcoming round of health care reforms. This group — which has the backing of two towns, nine villages, and eight RMs — believes a decision to downsize the Kerrobert Hospital and reduce services would be

an extremely short-sighted one and one with long-term ramifications for the community.

The west central health group believes any such decision would weaken the hospital to such a point that it would be forced to close down, leaving a massive void for health care services between Kindersley and Unity.

Can the minister guarantee his government will not downsize or decrease the services currently available at the Kerrobert Hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, as I've said in this House and in other places in the province in the last six weeks, we put 160 million new dollars into health care. Much of that money went to the regional health authorities. We're working with them as they develop their budgets.

We've asked everybody within the health care system to take a very hard look at all the things that they're doing because we don't have sufficient resources to do things as we've been doing them before. I'm not apologizing at all for the fact that we're looking very diligently at all of the expenses that we have.

We will continue to work with communities and understand that there are many very good services that are being provided in facilities right across the province. That's the concern that we have, and we'll be working with every community, including the community that the member raises.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The west central health group is made up of volunteers from a number of communities who are taking a proactive approach to preserving health care services in their community.

About a year ago this group began work on a plan to enhance health care facilities and services in the area. When the budget came down with a vague, yet ominous statement that there will be facility closures or conversions, the group sped up the planning process, hired an outside consultant with their own money, and put together a comprehensive proposal that would ensure the Kerrobert Hospital continues to provide services at current levels.

Mr. Speaker, the delegation here today would like to take 20 minutes with the minister to go through their proposal. After all, once the decisions are made, it's even harder to change someone's mind. Mr. Speaker, the minister just said that he's asked groups at the health board level to look hard at solutions. So I would ask the minister if he'll take the time today to look hard at the proposals put forth by this proactive group.

Mr. Speaker, to the minister: will he commit today to considering the proposal which I ask now to be tabled?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I will clearly commit to considering the proposal. The appropriate process, which I assume that the committee has done, is to work with the regional health authority who makes the plans for the things that happen in their particular area. And so if that has not happened, then I encourage them to have the discussion. But I'm fairly certain that they have had very extensive discussion with the Heartland Regional Health Authority.

Mr. Speaker, what we try to do across the province is to make sure that we end up with a provincial perspective on what we're going to provide for health care, but also a local perspective. And I know that many, many communities have provided very good advice on what's appropriate in their community, and I look forward to seeing what this particular community has presented.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would remind the minister that the decisions are in his hand. The delegation today is very aware of where the Heartland Health Board is situated. They came to Regina today to hear answers from the minister.

I've been trying to get a meeting for the west central health group with the Minister of Health for a few weeks now. A number of dates and times were provided to the minister's office for when the group could meet with the minister. I have called the minister's office myself four times, and my assistant has been in regular contact with the minister's office to get a time and date. And yet the minister has no time to meet with this delegation.

Mr. Speaker, this delegation has driven five hours to come here today to get some answers. Will the minister commit to meeting with them this afternoon for . . . if only for 20 minutes? And if not, will he commit to travelling to Kerrobert himself to meet with the community to discuss their proposal on the future of their hospital?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I think everybody in this Assembly knows that I'm a very reasonable man and a person who meets with people right across the province. And I will meet with this particular community, and it's . . . I'm not sure if we have time now today, given all of the other things that we're doing in this particular Assembly, but I will meet with them. But I think that the nature of the member opposite's questions also reflect one of the challenges that that particular area has in their representation. And I encourage all members who have come here to this legislature to observe very carefully how and what has been done.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Future of Gull Lake Health Centre

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last night in Gull Lake there was a public meeting to discuss the future of the Gull Lake Health Centre. And this meeting was put together in about 24 hours, and over 800 people showed up. Mr. Speaker, that's 800 people coming to a public meeting with 24 hours notice. I think that shows a level of very serious concern about the NDP plan to close health centres throughout Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, today the mayor of Gull Lake, the reeves, and some of the councillors of the surrounding RMs, as well as the town physician, have come to Regina to get an answer from this government. Will the Premier make a firm commitment today that the Gull Lake Health Centre will not be closed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's my understanding that at the meeting the CEO (chief executive officer) from the Cypress Regional Health Authority was present and was able to answer many questions and provide information. That's entirely appropriate, and I encourage communities to be involved. It's unfortunate that the members opposite have raised the . . . sort of the level of concern that they have around a number of these communities because we are working very diligently with many capable people across the province to make the appropriate decisions. And I encourage all people to be patient and allow us to do the work that needs to be done.

This is an extremely complex area, and we don't want to damage communities. We don't want to put patients in danger. We want to make sure that we provide good health care, but we have to do it with the resources that we have. I encourage that member especially, the other member who's asked the questions, to stand up and vote for this budget — show their constituents that are here that they support dollars for health care.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, it's true the CEO of the Cypress Health Region was in attendance at the meeting last night. And though he answered many questions, there was one question he would not or could not answer. And that was about the future opening and the maintenance of the existing health centre in the community of Gull Lake. He could not or would not answer it, Mr. Speaker.

So the Gull Lake Health Centre has 33 long-term care beds operating today. They're all full. It has three multi-purpose beds. And because the health centre is there, Gull Lake has a doctor who serves thousands of patients in the southwest part of the province. Dr. Kozroski would not be able to stay in Gull Lake if the health centre closed. Where would her patients go, Mr. Speaker? Where would the seniors and the long-term care beds go?

Mr. Speaker, the people of Gull Lake and area deserve answers. Will the Premier make a commitment today that the Gull Lake Health Centre will not be closed?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are working with \$160 million in new money in health care. We're trying to make that money go across many, many demands that are there. We have heard in this Chamber many requests from the opposition to increase spending in all kinds of areas and especially, as we heard earlier, as it relates to the education tax that's on property.

Mr. Speaker, we have to try to make some choices on this side of the House to get an appropriate balance. We're continuing to work very hard to make sure we get a choice that balances those people and that community's concerns around property tax, with their concerns around what kind of health care facilities they have in their communities. And we're listening very carefully, and we're not going to do this in a hurry. We're not going to make decisions without having a lot of discussion. And that's what we're doing right now, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health has said that he will meet with communities before any decisions about closures are made. Now the mayor of Gull Lake, the reeves of surrounding RMs, some of their councillors, and Gull Lake's only physician have come to Regina today to meet with the minister to discuss their very serious concerns.

Will the minister undertake to meet with this delegation as well as the one from Kerrobert this afternoon?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, given the length that this session has taken today due to some unknown reason to me, we are really cramped on a lot of meetings that I've had scheduled already. But I would be willing to meet with those people after the Volunteer Medal ceremony when the tea is on. And so if the member opposite wants to do it at that point, that's fine with me. But I then do have many challenges. I have a very, very full schedule today involving extremely important issues for our health care system.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Government's Commitments for Health Care

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, at last night's meeting in Gull Lake, a number of municipalities announced that if their health centre is shut down by the NDP, they will withhold their share of funding — their commitment — their share of funding for the new Swift Current Regional Hospital. They said they'll have no choice but to send that message. We know that Foam Lake has

taken similar action with respect to a project in Yorkton and, Mr. Speaker, that is what the NDP are doing with this. They pit community against community. Mr. Speaker, you don't build up one part of Saskatchewan by tearing the other part down.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, just a few years ago this Premier promised not to close beds. He said it wasn't the answer. This whole matter can be resolved with one simple step — the Premier to stand in the legislature today and say that he will keep his promise, that they can count on his word. Will he do that, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, if the new Leader of the Opposition hasn't already done so, I would invite him to read carefully the action plan for health that we have provided to the people of Saskatchewan, when we talked very specifically about health care facilities across this province and where we made very careful observation that no government can ever freeze-frame the existing circumstance forever. We have said very carefully that where issues confront communities in the provision of medical staff or in the provision of nursing staff, in the situation of a change in demographics, we were very specific about this, Mr. Speaker. And most citizens of Saskatchewan, except these members of the Saskatchewan Party opposition, have read this and would understand it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are going to make the best decisions available to us with new resources — perhaps not sufficient to all the demands, but new resources — decisions that will benefit the people of Saskatchewan in every one of our communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier should review his words. From December 5, 2001, this is what the Premier of the province said with respect to health facility closures. He said, and I quote: "The answer to financial sustainability is not to be found in the conversion or closure of small hospitals." Mr. Speaker, that's what the Premier of this province said.

The question is simple. The question is simple. Will he keep his promise? Will he give the people of Kerrobert, the people of Gull Lake, the people of Herbert, people across this province, will he give them a reason to trust his word, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, as with each and every budget year, we are working with our health regions to determine those decisions. In a matter of days or weeks the Minister of Health, in concert with the health regions, will announce precisely this year's budget activities and the

outcome thereof.

What we have already announced are new CT (computerized tomography) scanners, a new MRI (magnetic resonance imaging), a new hospital and new facilities in the member's hometown.

But I'll tell you what this government won't do. I'll tell you what we won't do, and I would have no part of, Mr. Speaker, what that Leader of the Opposition and that party are doing. They are going into communities today across the province, fearmongering, raising concerns, causing unnecessary concern among the people of Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker. I'd have no part of that, and I thought this leader promised us a new, more credible opposition. I've not seen it yet, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely incredible. It is absolutely incredible that the Premier would make the statement he just . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Once again, I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely incredible that the Premier would make the mistake he made. He wonders why communities in this province are concerned about this government and whether or not facilities will be closed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, maybe it's because it was referenced in his own budget, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it's because at this government . . . he as associate minister of Health closed 52 hospitals in the province of Saskatchewan already. Maybe it's because they have watched him break his word on every promise he made in the provincial campaign, Mr. Speaker.

And that is the question today. He has a chance to stand up and answer the question to the people of Kerrobert and Gull Lake and Herbert, who require these facilities, these facilities that are busy. Will he keep his promise? Will he keep his word, Mr. Speaker?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, first of all the Leader of the Opposition wants to review history. He wants to review some of his own history, when he worked for the operation that sat on this side of the House, on this side of the House and put this province to the verge of bankruptcy. Maybe we want to review that . . .

Now, Mr. Speaker, I tell you this. We made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan, and the people of Saskatchewan know where the New Democratic Party is on health. I'll tell you that. We made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan that we would provide, with the resources available to us, the best possible public health care that we can provide. And we've made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan that we

would do that based on the fundamental principles of medicare — the fundamental principles that were established in this province by this party and have been fought by that party in whatever machination we've seen in this legislature.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's time. It's time. Let's get to some fundamentals. Let's get to some fundamentals. Let's hear from this Leader of the Opposition. What are his fundamental principles when it comes to the delivery of health care in the province? Is he a supporter of publicly funded and administered medicare or not, or is he with his friend, Steven Harper, and the Conservative Party?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Reform of Education System

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to have an opportunity to stand in this House and to make a statement in reference to the restructuring of our school system.

This morning I had the pleasure to be in Balgonie at the Balgonie Elementary School to announce a significant change to our education system. Balgonie Elementary School, members in this Assembly may know, is part of the Qu'Appelle Valley School Division that was recently amalgamated from Buffalo Plains, Cupar, and Indian Head school divisions.

I did this announcement at Balgonie for two reasons. One, because it was a school in a newly . . . recently amalgamated district, and also because I think it served to remind all of us as to what the reason is for our education system, which is to make sure we have the highest quality services possible for the children of this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Today I am pleased to have announced the government's response to the Boughen Commission on financing our K to 12 system. That response is in keeping with the comments that I made on January 8, where I indicated that the issues presented by the commission were complex and did deserve close attention; that the commission did in fact provide valuable service to the province in identifying a number of issues. But that there were also concerns about some of the most high profile recommendations and a lack of consensus in the province on the way to move forward, not the least of which, not the least of which of course was the recommendation to increase the provincial sales tax and to expand that sales tax on to restaurant meals.

Certainly, as members in this House know, that had we expanded the sales tax on to restaurant meals that would have made an additional \$56 million available for property tax reform. Members are aware of that and I certainly understand that they were . . . where they were on that issue as they presented petition after petition in this House, arguing why we should not undertake that position. Undoubtedly they too

understood the trade-off that that would result in.

And as a result today we have decided instead to move forward with a number of other initiatives that were contained in the Boughen report, and other initiatives that I believe will help advance our school system as we move forward in the coming decade.

Mr. Speaker, our school system is changing. Today there are about 175,000 students in the province in just over . . . just under 800 schools. It is interesting to note, Mr. Speaker, that as a result of demographic changes, as a result of families deciding to delay having children or having smaller families, that in fact what we are seeing is about 3,000 fewer students entering kindergarten than are graduating out of grade 12, on an annual basis.

The result, Mr. Speaker, for the system is that we see a growing cost of education and the infrastructure around it. We see pressure for offering new educational resources and technologies where class numbers are shrinking; we see pressure for expanded school capital in communities in the North and urban areas where school populations are expanding; and we see pressure for fairer funding in larger communities where class sizes are growing due to the natural urbanization of the population.

As a result, we need to change the way that we structure our school system to ensure a maximum amount of money is available for education and can be dedicated to student services and instruction. At the same time we need to help mitigate the upward cost pressures of sustaining an infrastructure designed for a much larger student population.

That is why today I have announced the first part of a three-phase program to renew our school system. These three phases will focus on renewing and restructuring school divisions, developing a fairer system of funding from the provincial treasury, and committing to a long-term solution to lowering property taxes in Saskatchewan.

As a first step in this process, I am pleased to announce that a three-member education equity task force will be appointed to develop a new school division boundary map for the province. The task force will be chaired by Fred Herron, who members of this Assembly know is an esteemed former head of the Teachers' Federation and has an outstanding and intricate knowledge of the school system.

In the coming weeks, I intend to appoint two additional public representatives with experience at the school division level to assist Mr. Herron in this task.

The task force will consult with school divisions and education stakeholder organizations on the new boundaries to be established and will use the following criteria. The current 82 school divisions will be restructured to result in no more than 40 new divisions, including public, separate, and francophone divisions.

Each school division will have a minimum of 5,000 students. This recognizes a need for us to move from a system today where we have many school divisions with fewer than 50

students in them; some school divisions who have no schools in them. In fact, Mr. Speaker, this will recognize the need for us to modernize our system.

Each school division will have a base assessment per student that would allow it to qualify for provincial funding under existing programs, thereby eliminating the phenomena of the zero grant boards or boards that receive no provincial funds.

Except in special circumstances, existing divisions should be amalgamated in their entirety to provide for greater ease of consolidating the local contracts and the setting of uniform mill rates within the regional divisions. These conditions clearly do not apply to the North and the border community of Lloydminster given their unique circumstances.

And finally, while dealing with amalgamations, we will maintain respect for minority faith provisions of the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, there have been successful voluntary amalgamations. We have seen the benefit of these through the amalgamations at Sask Rivers, Qu'Appelle Valley School Division, Saskatchewan Valley, all of which have shown that amalgamation can lead to enhanced programs for students. And again I remind all members of this Assembly that the school system is there to serve the students of this province.

Certainly declining enrolments and inequities in the assessment pool are just two reasons we need to move forward with sustainable change, change that'll improve student access to education and improve equity for ratepayers no matter where they live.

Mr. Speaker, when we talk about changes, we understand that as we move to larger districts that we need to be mindful of how to protect individual local community control and input. As such, I have directed that the Department of Learning will develop a new system for local involvement within the larger divisions, building on the strength of the School^{PLUS} model.

I have directed the department to develop a new accountability mechanism at a local level that incorporates a new role for teachers, parents, ratepayers, and community agencies in schools at the community level to maintain and enhance local accountability, and that this model will be in place before the new, larger board elections are held.

I have asked that the education task force consult with divisions and stakeholders, and that they provide us with a new map no later than November 15 of this year. Along with that, I have asked that the new divisions will include new subdivision boundaries for local elections of trustees, and that elections will be held no later than October 2006.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to tell members that we have pulled together a restructuring coordinating committee to involve the stakeholders in this sector, including the School Boards Association, SASBO, LEADS, the STF (Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation), and other entities.

In order to make sure that local interests are protected during this time of transition, I have announced this morning that there

will be a moratorium on school closures effective September 1, '04, and it will remain in place until December 31, 2006.

I have also directed the Department of Learning to develop a new process for provincial funding of the school system, a new way to calculate the foundation operating grant that will take into account the renewed fiscal capacity of new divisions and put a focus on equity, simplicity, and transparency of government funding. In doing so, it will seek to reduce the number of factors we take into account from the current 17 different criteria, while emphasizing the basic strength of the per pupil grants.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to comment on the issue of education property tax. Our government recognizes that property owners, in particular agricultural property owners, are concerned about the level of education property tax. Today our government has committed that as new money becomes available through our efforts to deal with Ottawa and deal with its flawed equalization program, that we will dedicate 30 per cent of those new funds directly to property tax relief.

Mr. Speaker, the change in the school district restructuring, the change in the foundation operating grants, and our commitment on property taxes clearly demonstrates that the status quo is not on.

In closing, let me say that this new seven-point plan will serve as the basis for the most substantial education reform in Saskatchewan during the last 60 years. It will serve as a basis to restore fairness and equity to our education system. And it will ensure that Saskatchewan students will continue to have access to the high-quality services and schools that they deserve.

Mr. Speaker, that is the commitment of our government and I am pleased to announce it today. Thank you very much.

(15:00)

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McMorris: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I would like to say it's a privilege to respond to the ministerial statement made by the Minister of Learning. I would also thank him for sending over his remarks prior to his statement and I had a chance to review them. I also had a chance to listen to them earlier today in Balgonie, as I was at the press conference the minister hosted regarding their response to the Boughen Commission.

I have been in a lot of schools, Mr. Speaker, not only going to school but also after my school life when I taught in the school system for 10 years. And I've stood outside the doors and watched kids come out of the school, and never in my life have I seen so many people walk out of a school today with such glum, sad faces as the people from SARM, SUMA (Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association), and the School Boards Association, Mr. Speaker.

There wasn't a group that listened to the minister's conference

today that didn't come out with a sad and glum look on their face. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a shame because this government had an opportunity — they had an opportunity after commissioning Mr. Ray Boughen to look at the finances of education and to do the right thing and address property tax in this province. And they've missed and they've missed sorely, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McMorris: — Mr. Speaker, the minister talks about restructuring our school system to ensure that the maximum amount of money available for education can be directed at student services and instruction. And I would agree with that totally.

It was interesting that they used that setting to make their announcement, the setting in Balgonie school, because Balgonie was formerly part of the Buffalo Plains School Division which then amalgamated with the Indian Head School Division and the Cupar School Division, making a large school division of well over 5,000 students.

There wasn't one time when the government came out there and held a gun to their head like they're doing after this announcement — that this is exactly how you have to form it and this is the way it will be drawn up. And that's what the minister announced after today.

He's going to strike a commission that's going to look at . . . or another commission that's going to look at restructuring. And as he's mentioned a couple of times — not only today but in the past — that they're going to come with a map. Now you tell me what input school boards will have in their destiny when his commission comes back with a map and saying this is how the landscape of school boards are going to look in this province after his commission.

It has no input from school boards. And school boards have worked hard; they've worked diligently over the last three or four years and prior to that — over the last 10 years — to follow along with the minister and what the directions were from the Department of Education.

The Department of Education said a number of years ago, we want to see 25 per cent less school divisions in this province. And the school divisions, school boards at this point are within a couple per cent of 25 per cent less — doing exactly what the minister had asked them to do.

It's like the minister drew a line in the sand and when the school boards got to that line, he erased that line and said, that's not good enough; let's draw the line down here. And quite frankly, we don't think that you can get to that line so we'll do it for you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have absolutely no question and no problem with amalgamation. Amalgamation is the direction that we need to go. But there's a difference between boards choosing their dance partner and the government dictating to school boards who their dance partner will be.

It was interesting to listen to the minister talk about setting the frame or the reference for this new task force regarding school division amalgamation, and it's got a number of points here in his speaking notes. It says one point here, there will be no more than 40 new divisions, including public, separate, and francophone divisions. No more than 40. So the government right there is dictating.

Now that may be the proper number and I'm not saying it isn't the proper number. But perhaps school boards should have a say in what the proper number should be, Mr. Speaker.

It says each school division will have a minimum of 5,000 students. Well it's quite interesting. I don't know how the minister is with math and how he did in math when he was in school, but if you have 40 divisions at 5,000 students per division, that would mean we'd have well over 200,000 students in our school system right now. We have 40 divisions at over 5,000 people per division, we should have over 200,000 people in our school system right now, and he's wrong. We've got about 170,000 students in our school division, which is dropping by at least 3,000 students a year, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not saying that a 5,000-student school division is not the way to go. But take a look at the reality of rural Saskatchewan right now, Mr. Speaker. You would be looking at school divisions in the Southwest that the borders would probably run from Moose Jaw to the American border, and Moose Jaw west to the Alberta border — a school division of that size to get to the minimum of 5,000 people, 5,000 students per division, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that . . . Maybe 5,000 students per division is the route to go, but to dictate that they have to be no less than 5,000 students or the minister will not accept it is unreasonable and unrealistic. It doesn't match with rural Saskatchewan today.

Now that's not surprising because I'm not sure the last time he has been out to rural Saskatchewan. I guess today I could say he was to Balgonie, but has he been out to a rural school division and seen the geographical constraints that are put on divisions and amalgamation of divisions in that area?

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting the minister . . . his opening paragraph says the Minister of Learning held his news conference today to announce the response to the Boughen Commission on Financing K to 12 Education. And I think in the minister's own words when he was pushed by the media — because the Boughen Commission was structured to deal with the financial situation of education, how to properly finance education, and that was what the Boughen Commission was struck for — and in the minister's own words, he said, well maybe it isn't really a response to Boughen, frankly, because it doesn't deal with what Boughen was asked to deal with.

The announcement today was simply his idea and the Department of Learning's idea of the direction of education, notwithstanding anything that Ray Boughen and the Boughen Commission had to say, Mr. Speaker, because the key point that the Boughen Commission talked about was reducing the property tax burden — not only in rural Saskatchewan but in urban Saskatchewan too.

Because I don't think there would be a member on that side of the House that went door knocking from door to door that didn't get . . . Whether it was in Moose Jaw or whether it was in Saskatoon or whether it was in Maple Creek, one of the major issues that every one of us found on the doorstep was the major burden of property tax, and not just property tax — not just property tax, but specifically the education portion of property taxes is onerous to growth in this province. Something needed to be done and the government knew that.

The government struck the Boughen Commission for the very purpose that every one of us that were elected heard on the doorstep the problem with education funding in this province. We have to take it off of property tax and we have to put it more in the government's hands. The government has to actually put more money into education so that there is less reliance on property tax. And unfortunately after the Boughen Commission, the government missed it completely.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is not a response to the Boughen Commission. This is a response to how he and the department of Education want to see with the direction of education.

And we can debate whether amalgamation and directed amalgamation or forced amalgamation is part of it, but as Ray Boughen said, you can't cherry-pick the report. The report was designated, the report was designated for property tax, the report was directed for property tax relief, and that is the one area that this provincial government completely lost.

The provincial government and the minister said, well if we get more transfer from the federal government, perhaps we'll move that over and then address property tax. He's missed the total point of the Boughen Commission.

Next time this government spends \$500,000 on a commission, I wish it would read it and follow the recommendations. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Why is the minister on her feet?

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — To adjourn the House, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Would the minister . . . I'd like to go through a couple of more items here.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am extremely pleased to stand on behalf of the government today and table responses to written questions no. 304 through 312 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 304 to 312 inclusive have been submitted.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the House adjourn.

The Speaker: — Moved by the Deputy Government House Leader that this House would now adjourn. Order. Is the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10:00 a.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 15:11.

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CABINET MINISTERS

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Premier

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

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

Hon. B. Belanger
Minister of Northern Affairs

Hon. E. Cline
Minister of Industry and Resources

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

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