



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

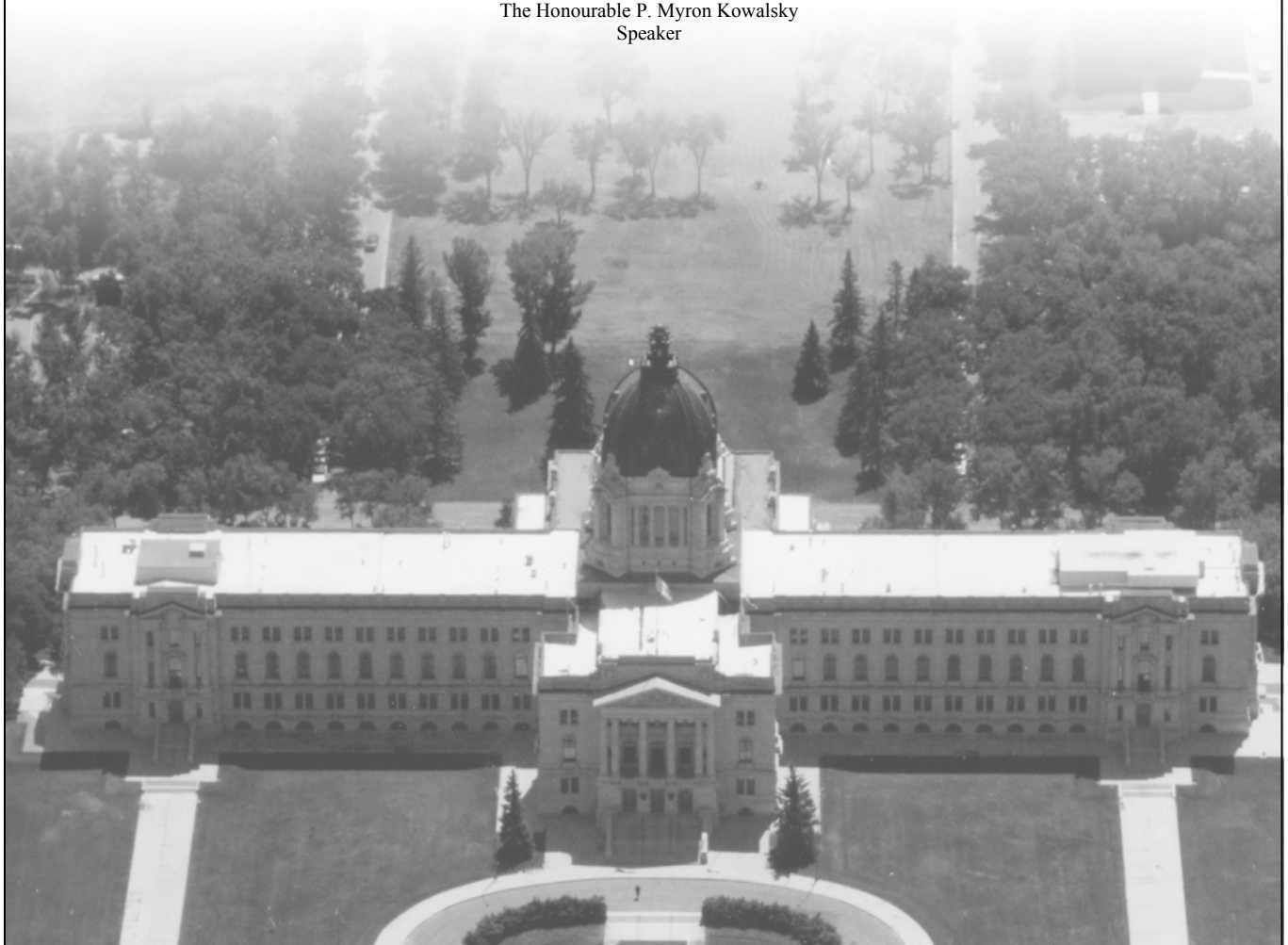
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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 Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to present a petition on behalf of constituents from the communities of Climax and Frontier concerning their worry about changes that have been proposed to the health centre there. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary actions to ensure that the Border Health Centre in Climax remains a 24-hour facility.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

It gives me great pleasure to present this, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise again on behalf of people from the Foam Lake constituency who are really concerned about the future of their long-term care facility. The prayer reads:

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

The people who have signed this petition are from Wadena, Kuroki, and Foam Lake.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Estevan.

Ms. Eagles: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to present a petition on behalf of residents of the Estevan constituency who are 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 Mainprize Manor & Health Centre is not closed or further downsized.

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

And, Mr. Speaker, this is signed by citizens of Midale, Macoun, Estevan, Halbrite, Weyburn, and Assiniboia.

I so present. Thank you.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about their health care and the future closure of facilities and beds. And the prayer reads:

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

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Weyburn and Colgate.

I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition here with citizens opposed to reduction of services to the Davidson, Imperial health centres.

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by citizens from Elbow, Regina, and Davidson.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from constituents opposed to possible reductions of health care services in Biggar. The prayer reads:

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

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Biggar and district.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of citizens of west central Saskatchewan concerned with the loss of ambulance service. And the prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to take the necessary action to ensure that the Dodsland and Luseland ambulance services are not discontinued.

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

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by the good citizens of Luseland and Salvador.

I so present.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I too have a petition to present demanding the government reverse its decision to cut funding to the Claybank Brick Plant. The prayer reads as follows:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly may be pleased to cause the government to reconsider the decision to reduce funding to the Claybank Brick Plant.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by people from Avonlea, Truax, and Rouleau.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

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

A petition concerning the Claybank Brick Plant;

A petition concerning Grasslands Health Centre;

A petition concerning Border Health Centre in Climax;

A petition concerning the Foam Lake Jubilee Home;

A petition concerning the Herbert Nursing Home;

And addendums to previously tabled petitions being sessional paper no. 63, 97, 106, 145, 160, and 169.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

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

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I give notice that I shall on day no. 47 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many communication directors and/or communication officers are employed at each regional health authority, and what is the breakdown for wages and expenses for each of them?

And I also give notice on day no. 47 I shall ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Health: how many communication directors and communications officers are employed within your department, and what is the total amount for their wage and expense?

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to introduce to you and to my colleagues in the legislature two representatives of the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation, SCIC, as well as representatives from a number of SCIC member agencies. With us today, Mr. Speaker, are Ms. Lori Latta, SCIC coordinator, and Ms. Trish Paton, SCIC overseas program coordinator, and other SCIC staff and board members.

SCIC is joined today by representatives of the following agencies: the Baptist Union of Western Canada; Canadian Catholic Organization for Development and Peace; Canadian Co-operative Association; Canadian Crossroads International; Foster Parents Plan; health international and their guests from Kenya; Oxfam Canada; Save the Children Canada; SIM (Serving in Mission) Canada; Wycliffe Bible Translators; World Relief of Canada; the Salvation Army. Also joining the council are representatives from two associate member agencies, SIAST (Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology) International and Fair Trade.

The council is an umbrella NGO (non-governmental organization) representing 33 local development assistance organizations in our province. For 30 years SCIC has administered the province's development assistance program, known as the matching grants-in-aid program. Mr. Speaker, 30 years ago this Assembly passed an all-party unanimous motion recommending the creation of the matching grants-in-aid program. The Government of Saskatchewan is a proud partner in this program. It is the strong Saskatchewan spirit of generosity and social responsibility that has supported the program in its efforts far and wide over the past 30 years, and it is this spirit we celebrate today.

Today is also the SCIC member agencies' annual NGO information day at the legislature, and this year's events will be the special 30th anniversary celebration. The special words of welcome, Mr. Speaker, take place at 5:30 today in room 218 and all members are invited to attend. They are, of course, invited earlier than that.

On behalf of the government I extend my best wishes to SCIC, all its member agencies. May your excellent work continue to provide help and hope around the world.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Rosetown.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to join with the minister in welcoming the large delegation that we have representing SCIC, which is the Saskatchewan Council for International Cooperation.

Particularly I would like to welcome Lori Latta and Trish Paton here today, as well as the representatives from at least 12 member organizations that are here for their day to meet with MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and discuss the fine work that they are doing.

As representatives of NGOs, I think it's quite notable that the public money that follows charitable donations to their causes are a way that the public funds can have the same priority that people place in supporting these organizations because the grants are matching.

I want to thank, on behalf of the official opposition, all of these people for the fine work they do to make our world a better place to live in. I think oftentimes we neglect to adequately thank those who, on a voluntary basis, raise funds to help people that are less fortunate than ourselves.

And so I would ask all members to join in welcoming the delegation from SCIC to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — Member for Saskatoon Eastview.

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the rest of the members of the House, in the Speaker's gallery which is very appropriate, a former Speaker of the House and now a constituent of Saskatoon Eastview, Herman Rolfes.

Mr. Rolfes has been a Speaker of the House, an MLA for part of the riding that I now represent, and a member of cabinet for many years of distinguished service. He now continues to serve the community of Saskatoon. And I'd like everyone to welcome him here to the Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hermanson: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. Sorry to trouble you again, but I also have a fine delegation of students here from Rosetown, Saskatchewan. The grade 8 class have made their annual pilgrimage to Regina and they are present with us in the east gallery. There are 49 students from the Rosetown High School sitting in that gallery, Mr. Speaker. And they are accompanied by teachers Karen Brodzki, Ken Boyd, and Richard Berezowski. And they're also accompanied by some parents who have taken the day to come down to Regina with them. The parents include Sheila Hare, Colleen Mann, Kari Prodahl, Susan Hodges, Tim Askin, Dianne Wiebe, and Brian Champion.

And, Mr. Speaker, I would also tell you that I'm on my best behaviour today because one of the parents is Susan Hodges, who is also the reporter for the *Rosetown Eagle* and keeps a close eye on me. So I'd like to welcome Susan, the other parents, the teachers, and particularly the grade 8 students who I'll have a chance to meet with later, to this Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know it's not every day we're able to welcome Canadian champions into the Assembly, but it is my pleasure to do so this afternoon.

Earlier this month The Regina Squids youth men water polo team went to Ottawa for the Speedo 2004 National Youth Men's National Club Championships. Mr. Speaker, this team made up of young men born in 1986 or later, went to Ottawa as the eighth seeded team and they came home as gold medal champions.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Mr. Speaker, they went undefeated throughout the championship and on May 9 beat the defending champions and top-seeded squad from Dollard-des-Ormeaux, Quebec, by the score of 6 to 4. In that championship game, Mr. Speaker, Kevin Graham scored three goals to bring his tournament leading total to an amazing 26 in 7 games.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Brad Ward scored twice and Jon Bastian scored once in contributing to the Squids' overall team effort in that championship game and the result of that effort is something we can be extremely proud of.

I'm pleased to say that this gold medal champion team had lunch with the minister for Culture, Youth and Recreation and the Premier today. And I was able to catch up with them over at the Premier's office for some photos and some talk with the Premier. I would . . . As well at that point, Mr. Speaker, they presented the Premier with a gold medal. They brought back so much gold they had one to share with the Premier — so many gold medals.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I would ask these individuals . . . I would like to introduce them to you and through you to the House, so I would ask these individuals to rise as I call their name.

We'll start with the goalie, Matt Sinclair.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. McCall: — Andrew Dickson, Jon Bastian, Steve Kruzeniski, Lucas Tetreault, Greg Korpan, Kevin Graham, and Alex Brazill.

There are three members of the team, Mr. Speaker, who could not be with us today, and I would like to acknowledge their efforts and success as well: Lars Yunker, Igor Zdravkovic, and

Brad Ward. Also, Mr. Speaker, I would like to introduce the team manager, Jim Graham; parent and assistant manager, Paul Korpan; and the most valuable coach of this championship tournament, the coach of the Regina Squids, Mike Mortin.

(13:45)

I invite all hon. members to welcome the Regina Squids, the Speedo 2004 Youth Men's Canadian Club Championship gold medallists, to the Assembly today and ask them to join me in congratulating this team on being such great ambassadors of our province, and on a job very well done. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to take this opportunity to introduce to you and to all colleagues here, John and Shirley Patmore from Lloydminster. They're here today representing the Canadian Co-operative Association. That association, along with the Co-operative Development Foundation, work with local communities in Canada and around the world to try and better lives through co-operative effort.

John and Shirley are retired from their jobs as a farmer and an accountant respectively. In fact, Shirley remains the president of the Lloydminster and District Co-op.

And since 1985, they've been very keenly interested in the work taken around the world and work in development, and they've been in six different countries including Asia, Africa, and Central America. I ask all my colleagues here to congratulate the Patmores for the great work that they are doing, and to welcome them to their legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Addley: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to join with my colleague from Saskatoon Eastview in welcoming Mr. Herman Rolfes to the legislature today. When I first got involved in politics the first campaign that I campaigned for was Mr. Rolfes, and the first executive I sat on was Herman's. And I was the youth rep on his executive, which wasn't that long ago, I must remind people.

But Mr. Rolfes was a model MLA and a very good mentor. And he represented his beliefs with passion and with strong beliefs in the issue, even if he was occasionally in the minority. You always knew where Mr. Rolfes stood. And I just wanted to say that if there was any blame in my conduct, it's mine. And if there's any credit, Mr. Rolfes and . . . Herman and Myrna share in that.

And I would ask all members to welcome Mr. Rolfes to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for

Melville-Saltcoats.

Mr. Bjornerud: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce through you and to you to the members of the Assembly, 11 grade 6 to 9 students from Countryside School by Saltcoats, and their teacher Evan Penner. I hope they enjoy their trip into Regina today and their tour of the legislature. And I'll be meeting with them at 2:30.

So I would ask all members to welcome them here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Borgerson: — Yes, Mr. Speaker, as someone who has done a bit of work with and for SCIC, I would like to as well welcome our guests today and to add a special welcome to one person in particular. Mr. Speaker, every year SCIC presents Global Citizen Awards to citizens who have made outstanding contributions to global education in this province.

This year my friend and constituent, Christine Zylar, received a Global Citizen Award. And while she could not be here today, I want to acknowledge and recognize her achievements, along with Karen Timoshuk, Christine Lwanga, and Elaine McNeil, who works with SIAST and is with us here today.

I ask Elaine to stand, and I ask members to welcome her and show her their appreciation for her work in this province.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken: — Mr. Speaker, I'd like to especially welcome the members of HELP (Health, Education & Livelihood Project Inc.) International that are here today. Mr. Speaker, HELP International is a Saskatchewan agency showing how people in this province can undertake to improve understanding locally and livelihoods internationally. HELP is very active in waste reduction, economic recycling, and environment preservation in some of the poorest slums in Kenya.

And visiting us today are representatives of HELP, four of whom are from Kenya: Gladys Mumbi; Julius Misandu; Professor Samuel Sinei, who is Deputy Vice Chancellor of Jomo Kenyatta, University of Science and Technology; and Hon. Dr. Esther Keino, member of the parliament of the Republic of Kenya. And accompanying them is Rodney Sidloski, who is from my constituency, Weyburn-Big Muddy. I've known Rodney for many years and I'd like to thank him for his tireless effort in the causes that he believes in and his work with HELP International.

And I'd like all members to welcome him here today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well there have been many wonderful introductions of many wonderful people from across our province. And not to be outdone, I'd like to as well . . . Some of you will have heard the announcement this past Monday of the Department of Highways Orange Zone Challenge. We have our contestant winners with us today. And I'll be saying a little bit more about that later on after question period.

But I would like to introduce to all of my colleagues in the legislature, the five winners of the challenge and very, very talented young people. I got to have lunch with them and visit with them a bit just an hour or so ago.

They're seated up in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and if I could I'd ask them to rise as I introduce them. First of all, the mayor of the SRC (student representative council), that's the proper terminology by the way, is Morgan Pryce — Morgan, if you just stand up and give a little wave — Joel Tiefenbach, Brad Lafrance, Chris Simmie, and Nathan Lariviere, all from Winston Knoll Collegiate. Please join me in welcoming them to our Assembly here today. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Martensville.

Mr. Heppner: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you to the other members of the legislature, I'd like to also introduce some of the people in your gallery, specifically, Gary Williams. I've had the privilege of having him in our home for coffee some time ago. Gary works with Wycliffe, with pre-literate people groups in approximately 70 countries. The linguists develop alphabets from these unwritten languages, obtain permission from the governments of these countries to print a variety of materials in these languages, and help them through the literacy-based development programs.

Gary Williams from Dalmeny has worked as a member of Wycliffe for 31 years, first as a linguist in the country of Burkina Faso with a pre-literate people group there and more recently, as Saskatchewan representative for Wycliffe. Randy Easthouse, a Wycliffe member worker with literacy-based development programs, has come here from Alberta today. And I would ask that you join me in welcoming them.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Cathedral Village Arts Festival

Mr. McCall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. From May 24 to 29, the Cathedral Village Arts Festival will host a week of activities, music, and celebration in the heart of Regina. This festival features the best in dance, theatre, literary arts, music, visual arts, and one of the largest craft sales in Saskatchewan.

When the festival first started in 1992, the street fair had 20 craft tables set up around the Cathedral Neighbourhood Centre.

This year the street fair will feature over 225 craft tables set up on 13th Avenue from Angus to Athol Street.

On Monday the festival will kick off with a picnic in Les Sherman Park at 12 noon. I understand it will be very warm and sunny — not to jinx anything, Mr. Speaker. There will be a barbecue, a kite fest, children's games, crafts, and music, and I couldn't think of a better way to spend Victoria Day.

Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that this festival takes place in the Cathedral Village. This community truly does have the characteristics of a village: tight knit, diverse performers, artists, small-business people, activists, school children, and volunteers. Anyone walking down 13th Avenue these days cannot only see it, but they will feel the sense of community.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in thanking everyone involved in the Cathedral Village Arts Festival for their endless hours of dedication to organizing and hosting this event, and I invite everyone to come on down to the village for a good time, good food, and great entertainment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

National Missing Children's Day

Mr. Kerpan: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. American author/lecturer Marian Wright Edelman said, "If we don't stand up for children, then we don't stand for much."

Mr. Speaker, Tuesday, May 25 is National Missing Children's Day, a day that was first honoured in the United States in 1983. Here in Canada the provincial chapters of Child Find recognize that this day and the month of May with their Green Ribbon of Hope Campaign. This year marks the 13th annual such campaign in Saskatchewan.

It saddens me to know that thousands of children go missing in Canada every year, Mr. Speaker. Many of these children may be runaways, fleeing from horrendous or intolerable circumstances in their personal lives and, Mr. Speaker, there are those children who have truly gone missing. Through the hard work and dedicated efforts of numerous agencies such as provincial chapters of Child Find, provincial and national law enforcement agencies, and the local groups and organizations, there are reunions between guardians and their children.

I ask all members of the House to recognize Tuesday, May 25 as National Missing Children's Day, with special mention going out to all those agencies and organizations here in Saskatchewan who have dedicated their efforts to not only keeping our children safe but also helping to reunite missing children with their families.

Mr. Speaker, we here in this House may not agree on a lot of issues, but there cannot and there must not be any disagreements on the protection of our greatest gift — our children, the most vulnerable of our society. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cumberland.

Canada Council for the Arts Award Winner

Hon. Ms. Beatty: — Mr. Speaker, each year the Canada Council for the Arts awards two Molson prizes of \$50,000 each to distinguished Canadians for their outstanding contribution to the cultural and intellectual life of Canada.

I am proud to share this year's recipient in the arts is Maria Campbell, a renowned Métis author, playwright, filmmaker, and professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Campbell began her career in 1973 when she published her autobiography, *Halfbreed*. This book has since become a literary classic and continues to be one of the most widely taught texts in Canadian literature. Ms. Campbell has written, directed, and produced numerous plays and produced the first weekly Aboriginal television series, *My Partners, My People*.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Campbell has been inducted into the Saskatchewan Theatre Hall of Fame. She's a sought-after guest speaker all over the world. She is currently finishing her M.A. (Master of Arts) in Native Studies at the U of S (University of Saskatchewan).

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Campbell's contribution to Canadian and Aboriginal literature has had a significant impact on the cultural evolution of Canada. The jury was unanimous in its choice of Maria Campbell for the 2004 Molson Prize in the arts, noting her status as a teacher, mentor, and inspiration to Aboriginal people and all Canadians is unparalleled.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all my colleagues to join me in recognizing Maria Campbell, her outstanding achievements, and in congratulating her on winning this prestigious award.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

2004 Swift Current Business Excellence Awards

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last night the Swift Current business community honoured its top businesses of the year at the sixth annual Swift Current Business Excellence Awards. I was fortunate enough to have the opportunity to attend last night's banquet where there were approximately 260 people at the Legion Hall in Swift Current.

Mr. Speaker, the business people in Swift Current and in the district take much pride in their work, and it's evident in the fact that there were 46 nominees in eight different categories, Mr. Speaker.

The winners this year are: Bob L'Heureux Agencies for community involvement; Gerry and Darrin Treen and the Treen family of Treen Packers Ltd. — they received the heritage award; the new business award went to Quilt's 'n Treasures Ltd.; Ron Schultz and his wife, Luanne, and the staff at PDQ

Autobody won the customer service award for businesses under 10 employees; and Soultis Grower Direct was presented with the young entrepreneur award.

I'd like to make special mention of Thrifty Foods — they picked up two awards last night. Thrifty Foods won the business choice award and the customer service award for a business with 10 employees and over.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, the top award, the business of the year award, was presented to Ryan Tynning and the staff at Swift Plumbing & Heating.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members of the Assembly to congratulate the winners and all of the nominees, and especially the Chamber of Commerce who hosted a very successful sixth annual Business Excellence Awards. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Athabasca.

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Youth Assembly

Hon. Mr. Belanger: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations executives were in Prince Albert to pass along their knowledge as well as to learn from their future replacements at the third annual Youth Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, each of the province's 75 First Nations sent one male and one female delegate to attend the Assembly. These included the Black Lake, Birch Narrows, Canoe Lake Cree, Clearwater River Dene, English River, Flying Dust, Fond-Du-Lac, Island Lake, Makwa Sahgaiehan, and the Waterhen Lake First Nations, all from the constituency of Athabasca and Meadow Lake and Cumberland, Mr. Speaker.

(14:00)

This conference is extremely important in educating youth about the politics and leadership. Over the three days various FSIN (Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations) chiefs covered topics including the treaty governance process, gaming, veteran affairs, and housing.

Mr. Speaker, First Nations make up the largest, fastest growing sector of the population in Saskatchewan. Because of that rapid growth, many more members of the Saskatchewan legislature will soon be from First Nations or Aboriginal cultures. It is important to teach these young people to get involved in leadership positions in this province, while at the same time maintaining their language, identity, and culture.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize the FSIN and all the First Nations youth who got involved in this conference for taking a leadership role in their communities.

Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Opening of Outlook's Skytrail

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last Saturday was a red-letter day for the community of Outlook, in the Rosetown-Elrose constituency. Hundreds of people, including the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, the Minister of Health, and Gail and myself attended various events centred around the grand opening of the Skytrail, which is Canada's longest pedestrian bridge.

This bridge was originally constructed in the early part of the last century as a railway bridge for the Canadian Pacific Railroad. However, a train has not used this spectacular crossing of the South Saskatchewan River since 1987. The Skytrail, which was officially opened last Saturday by Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, has been incorporated into the Trans Canada Trail which crosses Saskatchewan and in fact the entire country.

Congratulations to the community-minded people of Outlook and area who raised money and volunteered hundreds of hours to undertake the project. These volunteers were recognized throughout the day and at an evening banquet where proceeds from the ticket sales were earmarked for the community's new integrated health centre, which has been approved after being on the drawing board for quite some time, and for which the community is very successfully raising their portion of the funds.

So, when you go holidaying this summer looking for interesting sites right here in Saskatchewan, be sure to walk the absolutely spectacular skywalk in the great town of Outlook.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Monday night I attended the farewell dinner for the Saskatchewan tour group in the 2004 Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference.

As an alumnus of the 1995 conference, I was excited to hear how this year's tour group enjoyed their experience in Saskatchewan. My tour was of the Maritime provinces and it was a life-altering experience.

Mr. Speaker, the Governor General's Leadership Conference happens every four years and it has a different theme each time. This year's theme was Diversity in Leadership. Each province sends 16 participants to the conference who are then divided up and sent in teams to other provinces. Participants are from business, government, community, and labour. Each team meets with groups, individuals, and companies that reflect the theme of the tour.

Mr. Speaker, the 2004 Saskatchewan Tour members were from

Quebec, Ontario, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia and were extremely pleased — and impressed — with their visit to Saskatchewan. The tour Chair said that the magic of Saskatchewan came alive for them.

Mr. Speaker, even though Saskatchewan had not been the first choice for some of the members of the group, once seeing all we had to offer, they said that our province is now dear to their hearts.

Mr. Speaker, these are Canada's future leaders and I was privileged to meet them and compare our experiences. And, Mr. Speaker, I was more than proud to hear their glowing praise for Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Staffing Resources in Health Care

Mr. Gantefer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier. On the first page of last week's election platform the Premier promised, and I quote, "more nurses and health care professionals." But yesterday the Minister of Health announced the NDP's real plan — to fire nurses, close hospital, and cut beds. But then just minutes later, Mr. Speaker, the Premier tried to deny that obvious fact as well.

Mr. Speaker, maybe the Premier would explain today, how does firing 250 nurses and health care professionals help to retain and recruit nurses and health care professionals in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there's an old saying in rowing circles. It goes something like this: only the guy who's not rowing rocks the boat. And I think that across the way we have a bunch of people who aren't rowing. They're not pulling and working around building our health care system in this province. I ask them to do that. They can do it by voting for our budget that provides dollars for health care. They can do it by working with us as we look at how we can provide services right across this province.

Mr. Speaker, the member opposite raises questions around the people who are involved in the health care system whose jobs will be changed. We will be working with all of those people to make sure that they get a position in the health care system, and that's the plan that we have.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefer: — Mr. Speaker, there's another old saying in the rowing circles: if you only got one oar in the water, you keep going in circles.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the head of the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is having trouble believing the Premier these days. And it's not hard to understand . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order, order. The member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, during the election the Premier promised to hire more nurses. Now he's firing nurses, and the Saskatchewan Union of Nurses is saying that the worst is yet to come. The Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association say the NDP (New Democratic Party) already lose 200 nurses per year due to out-migration. The Canadian Institute of Health Information says Saskatchewan has the lowest nurse retention rate in the country, and Saskatchewan Health reports that there are 203 nursing vacancies in Saskatchewan right now.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier explain how his new plan to fire nurses and close beds will shorten waiting lists, will lighten the load on overcrowded nursing stations and emergency rooms, how it will improve health care in Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on this side of the House we have the left oar in and the right oar in, and we're going straight ahead with the people of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we've been working with the nursing profession around providing more nursing training places. Also we've been working around retention issues. We've been working to try to make sure that we have appropriate workplaces for people. All of these things are things that we have to do together with the professionals. And we're going to continue to do that.

Mr. Speaker, there's a goal of providing good health care for individuals in Saskatchewan. We have that goal. We're working hard toward that goal with all of the people within the system and with all the citizens of the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Health announced there would be fewer nurses after this action taken by the NDP government. He announced there would be many fewer nurses in the province of Saskatchewan. The Premier then denied it later in question period. And later today, someone over there should explain what the truth is. Will there be . . . will this result in fewer nurses in the province of Saskatchewan or not?

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and the Minister of Health have been saying they plan to consult with affected communities before

any changes are made in the health system. But like everything else the NDP says, it's not true; they didn't consult with anybody in these 12 communities. And, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party, as you know, has introduced a motion calling for the Standing Committee on Human Services to hold public consultations in every community that's been affected before, before the health cuts are made.

Mr. Speaker, will the minister make good on his commitment, on the Premier's commitment, to consult with these communities before the cuts are made? Will he support this motion?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we are working in the province, as I indicated before, to support the training of nurses, the hiring of nurses, the retaining of nurses within the health care system. There are some changes that will happen for some of the staff as it relates to the 12 affected communities that were talked about yesterday, and we will be working with those professionals to have them continue to participate in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work with communities, and we continue to listen to the kinds of things that are there. The member from Cypress introduced some of his members, or some of his constituents who are here and concerned about one of the particular areas. I was pleased to meet with them. I've met with some of the other groups.

I know that the regional health authorities have been working on many challenging issues around preparing their budgets, but I know that they will continue to talk with communities because this is not an easy task, but we have to do it together.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is right. He has met with some select groups, and maybe it even helped. And that's precisely the point. Will he now meet with all of these communities before they make cuts in those communities, Mr. Speaker? That's precisely the point. Will he also meet with the communities affected by yesterday's announcements? Will they hold consultations in those communities before the cuts are made?

Mr. Speaker, when the government and the opposition together agreed on new rules for this Assembly, on a committee process that would go out and hold public . . .

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

Mr. Wall: — When that occurred, the NDP member for Regina South said:

The government's recent experiences in making provision for public presentation and discussion on the Fyke

Commission has been very positive. The ability to more routinely facilitate citizen input on policy will strengthen the process of democracy and government in our province.

Mr. Speaker, if it was true about Fyke, it's certainly true about these decisions. Will the Premier direct his members to support our motion for wide, public consultation in the affected communities?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, we've clearly had some challenges around implementing the new rules, and I won't say anything further than that. But I think when we got a new leader on the opposition there were some changes that were not following previous agreements.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I would say is that I would like to quote a comment made by our learned journalist who comes here every day. And he said this, today's paper. He said:

Even Opposition health critic Rod Gantfoer — while bombastic during question period — acknowledged that “some of these adjustments just recognize” the change in health care utilization in some communities.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of our challenges, to recognize the change in some health care communities and we're going to continue to do that. If we can save \$1 million on a facility, we're going to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Wall: — Well, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the facilities we're talking about today, there are waiting lists for these facilities, Mr. Speaker. These facilities are busy. And what could be more reasonable, what could be more reasonable than going out to these communities to meet with them and discuss the future of health care in those communities and the surrounding area and the impact the closures will have, by the way, in urban Saskatchewan? What would be more reasonable than going out and doing it through the legislative committee of this House?

The minister referenced the fact that he himself met with various delegations that our members have brought forward and said they listened. So if it was good in that case, why wouldn't it be good in the case of Herbert and Cupar and Foam Lake and Weyburn? Will the Premier direct his members to vote for our resolution and send this committee out for a consultation before these cuts are made?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for the Leader of the Opposition. It's a very simple question. Why did that new leader change the agreement and vote to have Health estimates done in the whole . . . in the Finance committee rather than in the Health committee? The . . .

The Speaker: — Order. Order, please. Order. Order. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there's a simple question that I asked the member who is the Leader of the Opposition, and I request his response.

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

Health Care Services

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, every town and rural community in Saskatchewan is fighting for survival because of the attacks of this NDP government on rural Saskatchewan.

Last night I asked the Minister of Health if he realized how vital it was to have a . . . for a community to have a health care centre. I asked him how his government, the Department of Health, and the Department of Rural Revitalization worked together to have a solid vision for growing our province.

Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health: which departments of your government has met with town officials in Foam Lake to find out how the closures of the health facility in Foam Lake is going to affect that town?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

(14:15)

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the issues around dealing with all of the towns in this province relate to . . . how do we provide services that provide a good, solid base for economic development?

And as I explained to the member opposite last evening, what I often see and I know what our government sees is that health care is one of those legs on a three-legged stool. The other one is education. The other was the communication, highways, SaskTel, those kinds of things. Those are all important that you provide some stability in communities.

We know that from work that we've done right across the province . . . and that's part of why, even in very challenging times for our budgets, we were able to put together a budget like this. Not every community was totally able to escape some of the changes that are made because changes are happening in these communities.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Draude: — Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the mayor and the people of Foam Lake are going to be delighted to hear the Minister of Health talking about a three-legged stool instead of a health centre in Foam Lake.

Foam Lake mayor, Bob Johnson, is fed up with the NDP's

never-ending cuts to health services in his community. Yesterday this NDP government decided to cut four acute care beds, 11 long-term care beds, and one respite bed from the health centre. This is the same facility that has been downgraded several times over the past few years such that emergency services are only available 9 to 5, five days a week. Mayor Johnson says, and I quote, "We don't know what direction to turn . . . (any more and) I . . . tell you we're as mad as hell."

Mayor Johnson believes the NDP have abandoned the community. Again I quote, "Unfortunately, it seems that we're always at the brunt of the cuts being made." Mr. Speaker, Foam Lake's health services have been cut and cut . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Would the member repeat her question, please.

Ms. Draude: — Health services have been cut and cut and cut without public consultation. Enough is enough. Will the minister commit today to consult with the people of Foam Lake and area before these changes are made?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the member raises some concerns about the four acute care beds in that community. It's my understanding they haven't been used since 2002, and they have had some challenges around staffing. But these are facilities that aren't used.

What I would say to the member opposite and to all people of this province, there have been increasing demands that have been highlighted by the members opposite around some very technical, highly skilled kinds of services that we need in our province, and those things continue to come up again and again. We have to balance the kind of access to the best medical technology we can get, whether it's MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging), CTs (computerized tomography), or all of the very various surgical specialties or the medicine people — with access across the province. And that's the fine balance that we have to do in this whole exercise around a budget.

Mr. Speaker, we are working very carefully and diligently with that, and we are trying to work with everybody in the province as we do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Stewart: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Herbert and area are losing their hospital with no consultation with this government. In fact, the mayor of Herbert said he felt blindsided by this announcement and that there was no community consultation whatsoever.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Herbert put together a brief that they wanted to present to the Minister of Health. But before they could do that, their hospital was closed. Will the Premier listen to the people of Herbert? Will he support our motion to hold a public hearing in Herbert before their hospital is actually closed?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, the brief from the town of Herbert was forwarded to me approximately a week ago, and so I did see that particular brief. I know that the officials and the people from the Cypress Regional Health Authority have been in regular discussion with the people in Herbert as it relates to some of the utilization issues and some of the organization issues of the facilities in that particular community.

This is an ongoing discussion, and what we have to try to do is work with the kinds of resources that we have, look at the kinds of changes that can be made. Last night we heard, as the member asked the questions, that in this particular facility it's about \$1 million saving on an annual basis to consolidate the two health care facilities in that community.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the NDP committed to spending \$23 million to provide 135 long-term care beds in the new Tatagwa View facility in Weyburn. This new facility is not even open yet, and the NDP are already cutting 12 beds.

Mr. Speaker, we already have a shortage of beds in the constituency of Weyburn-Big Muddy, as well as surrounding constituencies. Just yesterday I was contacted by a family looking for a long-term care bed for their mother. There is not a bed available in Weyburn, Estevan or Carlyle. The only answer for this family is that their mother be sent out of the area.

Mr. Speaker, did the NDP even bother to consult with the people of Weyburn before their decision? And, Mr. Speaker, how can the minister justify closing beds in Weyburn when we already have a shortage? How can the minister justify breaking the commitment of \$23 million to provide 135 long-term care beds in Weyburn? And can the minister tell the people of Weyburn where they are supposed to go to provide care for their loved ones?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, it's been a real challenge to build this project in Weyburn because I've had not a whole lot of co-operation from the member of Weyburn. And so we are proceeding with this particular project.

And, Mr. Speaker, what has happened in this community is that there were discussions around reorganization of how they provide . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in the Sun Country Health

Region, there were discussions about how to provide mental health services which have traditionally been provided in the city of Weyburn. And as those discussions went forward, there were some possibilities of having them provided in the city of Estevan because they had space and . . . But working with the people of the community, of the community of Weyburn, they decided that an appropriate way to deal with this was to put 12 of the mental health beds in the new facility that was being built. This is a suggestion that has come from the workers and from others who are there. We think it's a good idea.

Obviously, the Cypress or the Sun Country Health Region . . .

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

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, the NDP government also made cuts in my constituency.

The long-term care facility in Davidson has 40 beds, 36 of those are full. And yesterday, the NDP decided to cut those beds to 30. Since the facility opened, 35 to 40 beds have always been in use. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, the NDP now has created a waiting list for long-term care in the facility.

And how did the residents in that home, how did the people in the surrounding community hear about them cuts? How did the people who's going to lose jobs hear that? They heard it on the radio, Mr. Speaker. They heard it on the radio. This government didn't have the respect, the common decency to hold a public meeting to let them know what was happening in their facility.

Will the minister commit today to hold a public consultation before he cuts beds, before he cuts jobs in the town of Davidson?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the tasks that you have on the government side is to try to make choices in sometimes some very challenging areas. And we know that we have dramatic increase in expenses in many of the specialty kind of work that we do. We also know that we have to provide long-term care across the province.

In the Davidson facility that the member asks the question about, there are 10 rooms that are in this old wing which are not up to code. They don't have their own individual bathrooms, and they're in a situation where they're not wheelchair accessible. Mr. Speaker, the plan is to phase these out so that we can just use the newer ones that were built more recently. And that is what we are doing throughout the whole health care system . . . is making changes as we renew the system and renew the facilities and make them better for all Saskatchewan citizens.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Hart: — Mr. Speaker, the people of Cupar were also expecting the NDP to listen to them before health services are consolidated and long-term beds are closed, but that didn't happen. In fact, Mayor Val Orb didn't even get the details of the announcement until my office faxed them to her. She said and I quote, Mr. Speaker:

I wish we could have sat down and talked about it before it was announced publicly. I thought there would be more consultation, but I guess that's not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Cupar want to be listened to before their health services are consolidated and long-term beds are closed. Will the minister allow that to happen?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, in communities right across the province, there have been discussions about the kinds of services that are to be provided.

I know that in the community of Cupar there have been concerns that were raised about the facility and about how they should try to do some other things there. And in fact, the member who's raised the question today was explaining how this all worked last night. And so if people care to, they can read *Hansard* last night and get a very good explanation about a community that's working on these things.

Mr. Speaker, we ended up in bringing forward this information on the basis of trying to let the province know which communities were going to have changes that would take effect in those communities. We did that yesterday, Mr. Speaker, so that we could effectively calm the waters and allow people to move forward. And that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work to make sure we have the best care for everybody.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Commitments Made During Election Campaign

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Premier today. Last September, the Premier made the first of what would become a long and still growing list of broken NDP election promises.

The Premier said that Saskatchewan has today and will continue to have in the future the lowest cost bundle of utility services in Canada. Well, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't true then, and this morning the NDP had to admit that it's not true today.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what makes this latest broken NDP election promise unique is that the Premier broke this election promise

even before the election was called. Mr. Speaker, if the Premier breaks election promises even before he calls the election, how will the people of Saskatchewan be able to trust any promise this Premier makes thereafter?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier made his announcement last September about the New Democratic Party's vision for our Crown sector in the province of Saskatchewan, he indicated at the time that, and it was provided, that the information was based upon the information that came out of the 2003 budget, Mr. Speaker. And the information from the 2003 budget were statistics from 2002.

Mr. Speaker, what we tabled with the public this morning was our utility rate bundle in comparison to other jurisdictions for the fiscal year 2003.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Elhard: — Well, Mr. Speaker, for the minister to blame the Premier's election promise on the information contained in the budget is to transfer blame to the Department of Finance. Obviously, Mr. Speaker, we can't trust the figures from the Department of Finance on this promise or some of the other materials the department provides as well.

Mr. Speaker, the biggest problem with this particular broken NDP election promise is that the promise of the lowest cost package of utility services was unnecessary and irresponsible in the first place.

The Speaker: — Sorry. Order please, members. I'd like to be able to hear the question, even if it's only 15 feet, but I want to be able to hear it. The member for Cypress Hills.

Mr. Elhard: — Mr. Speaker, the promise initially was unnecessary and it was clearly irresponsible because when the NDP stays out of the way, our Crown Corporations already do a good job of providing high-quality services at competitive prices to Saskatchewan families right here in the province of Saskatchewan — not the lowest cost utility services, but very competitive costs nevertheless.

Will the Premier admit, Mr. Speaker, that he was relying on inaccurate information last fall when he said that Saskatchewan has the lowest cost bundle of utility services? And will the Premier admit it was an irresponsible ploy to curry favour with the electorate?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Mr. Speaker, what's so interesting

about the member's question was that he said that the Premier's commitment to the people of this province was unnecessary. Well then I have to ask the members opposite, why was it necessary for the then leader of the opposition, the member from Rosetown, to indicate that not only would they commit to the NDP's promise, but they would improve upon the NDP's promise?

Mr. Speaker, I think what we have here is a case of the opposition is still upset that in the last provincial election the people of this province became very focussed upon the future of their publicly owned Crown corporations. Because, Mr. Speaker, they believe that the members opposite were about to privatize those Crown corporations because of the actions of the now leader of the Saskatchewan Party when, day in and day out, what he did was undermine the service and the work of the people that work in our Crown corporations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:30)

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

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

Winners of the Orange Zone Challenge

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

The Speaker: — Order please, members. I recognize the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Mr. Speaker, Saskatchewan's transportation system is a key contributor to both economic and social development in the province. Because the transportation system is so important, we invest a lot of money — in fact about \$300 million this year alone — to upgrade and maintain it. That means that every summer there's a lot of construction activity on our highway system.

But in addition to providing an efficient transportation system, we are very concerned about safety, Mr. Speaker. Now just imagine for a minute that you had a job where cars, trucks, and buses passed you on a regular basis at fairly high speeds quite often. Obviously you can understand the need to educate people about the risks and the rules of road . . . of the road, I should say, in construction zones.

To protect the safety of employees of the department, the road building industry, and the general public, Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation introduced the Orange Zone Challenge. The purpose of this contest is to take a proactive approach to safety by providing the opportunity to have advertising developed by younger, newer drivers for younger, newer drivers that encourages people to slow down in the orange zone. It also provides an invaluable opportunity for students to gain real world experience that will help to enhance their careers after their schooling is complete.

The first contest was run last year as a pilot project in

conjunction with Regina's Campbell Collegiate. This year the contest was open to high school students across our province, and Monday I had the chance to announce this year's winners. We received 20 entries from throughout Saskatchewan. While the tremendous creativity and imagination of Saskatchewan's youth was clearly evident in all the submissions, the work of five talented young people stood out.

This year's winners are five students from Winston Knoll Collegiate right here in Regina and they were with us as I've introduced them earlier today, Mr. Speaker. They are Morgan Pryce, who is also mayor of the student council, Joel Tiefenbach, Brad Lafrance, Chris Simmie, and Nathan Lariviere. In recognition of their efforts IBM (International Business Machines) Canada has donated a new laptop computer to Winston Knoll on their behalf. And, Mr. Speaker, the Orange Zone Challenge campaign is all about raising awareness and these students have done a great job at that.

But I would encourage you, Mr. Speaker, and all members of the Assembly not to take my word for it; you will be able to see and hear the results of their creativity on TV and on radio beginning this week.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all members in the Assembly to join with me in welcoming Morgan, Joel, Brad, Chris, and Nathan, and congratulating them on winning this year's Orange Zone Challenge. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the safety of our construction workers, and all workers for that matter, is a concern and a responsibility for all of us. It must be particularly intimidating for our road construction workers who must concentrate on their job working with large equipment while traffic is rushing by.

So we applaud the government's initiative for the Orange Zone Challenge. And we applaud all the young people who met that challenge. And on behalf of the Official Opposition, congratulations and welcome to the winners — welcome to Morgan, Joel, Brad, Chris, and Nathan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Regina Dewdney, the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 324 through 331 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to questions 324 to 331 inclusive have been submitted. I recognize the Government Whip.

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm

extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and convert for debates returnable questions no. 332 through 349 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Questions 332 through to 349 have been converted to orders for return debatable.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, to facilitate the work of the Standing Committee on the Economy and the Standing Committee on Human Services I move the House do now adjourn.

The Speaker: — Before I take that motion I would . . . Why is the member from Indian Head-Milestone on his feet?

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker, with leave to introduce a guest?

The Speaker: — Has the member got leave for introducing guests?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The member may proceed.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you and to you and to the rest of the Assembly, I'd like to introduce Ray Beck, sitting in the east gallery. Ray and I go back many, many years. We've played on many sports teams together — hockey, and a few other teams, but we also played against each other and I found it was a lot easier to play with Ray than against Ray in most of the different sporting competitions we were in.

Ray comes from Lang, Saskatchewan and I'm not sure if he's in town today, because I saw his son Blair earlier in town with a group from Carnduff, as Blair is teaching in Carnduff now.

Ray runs an outfitting company in the fall season for fowl, for hunters coming up, mainly from the States, and shows them around the southern part of our province and does a great job of it. So I'd like all members to welcome Ray to the Assembly today.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This House stands adjourned until next Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.

The Assembly adjourned at 14:37.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

PRESENTING PETITIONS

Elhard	1231
Draude	1231
Eagles	1231
Bakken	1231
Brkich	1231
Weekes	1231
Dearborn	1231
McMorris	1232

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk	1232
--------------------	------

NOTICES OF MOTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Draude	1232
--------------	------

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Taylor	1232
Hermanson	1233
Junor	1233
McCall	1234
Wakefield	1234
Addley	1234
Bjornerud	1234
Borgerson	1234
Bakken	1234
Sonntag	1234
Heppner	1235
McMorris	1243

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

Cathedral Village Arts Festival

McCall	1235
--------------	------

National Missing Children's Day

Kerpan	1235
--------------	------

Canada Council for the Arts Award Winner

Beatty	1236
--------------	------

2004 Swift Current Business Excellence Awards

Wall	1236
------------	------

Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations Youth Assembly

Belanger	1236
----------------	------

Opening of Outlook's Skytrail

Hermanson	1237
-----------------	------

Governor General's Canadian Leadership Conference

Junor	1237
-------------	------

ORAL QUESTIONS

Staffing Resources in Health Care

Gantfoer	1237
----------------	------

Nilson	1237
--------------	------

Wall	1238
------------	------

Health Care Services

Draude	1239
--------------	------

Nilson	1239
--------------	------

Stewart	1240
---------------	------

Bakken	1240
--------------	------

Brkich	1241
--------------	------

Hart	1241
------------	------

Commitments Made During Election Campaign

Elhard	1241
--------------	------

Atkinson	1242
----------------	------

MINISTERIAL STATEMENTS

Winners of the Orange Zone Challenge

Sonntag	1242
---------------	------

Harpauer	1243
----------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

Yates	1243
The Speaker	1243

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Minister Responsible for Public Service Commission

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