



FIRST SESSION - TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE

of the

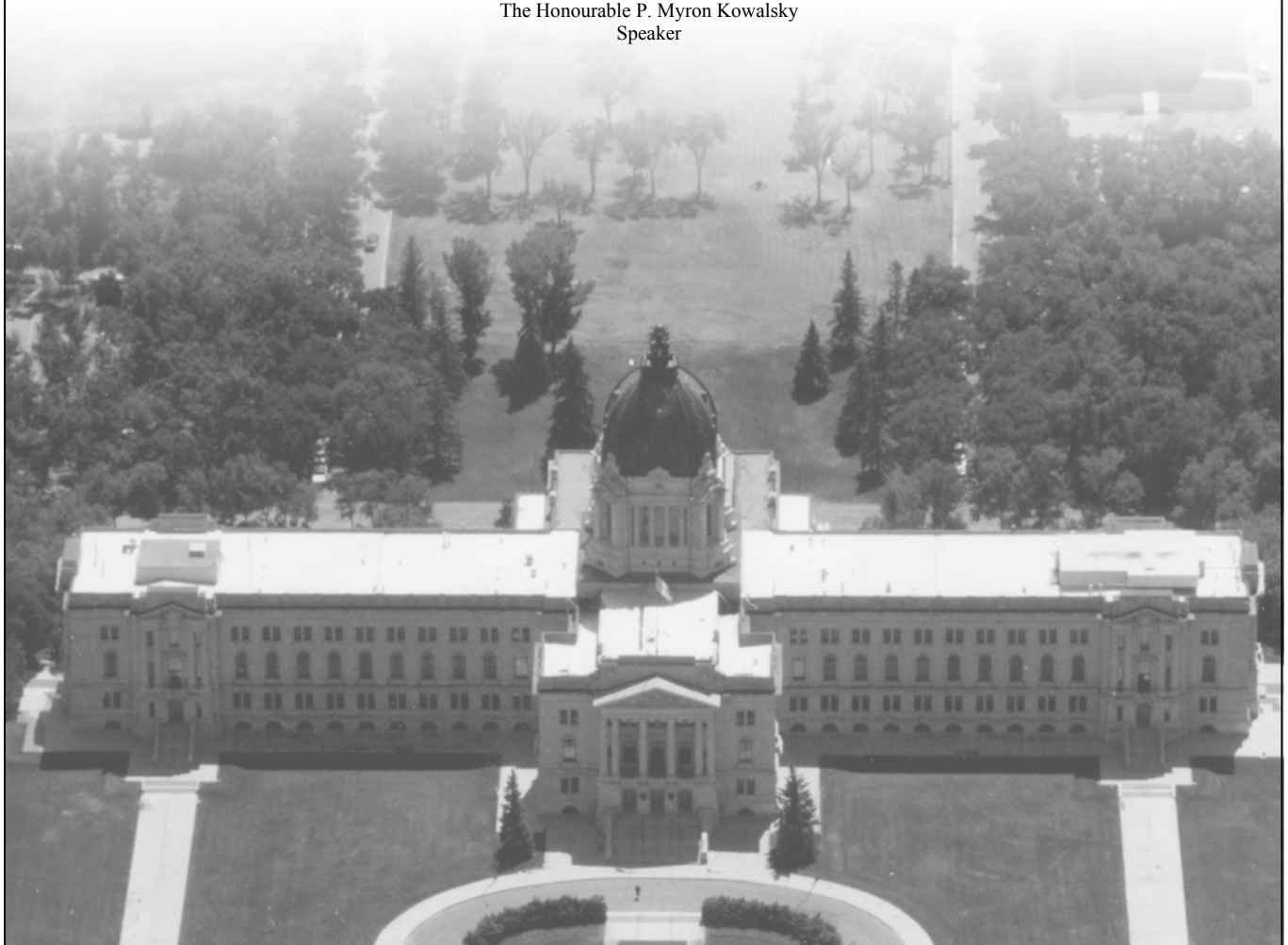
Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan

**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. The continued concern about reduced service hours at the Border Health Centre in Climax is the subject of a petition today. 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.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is signed by individuals from the communities of Climax, Frontier, Shaunavon, and Bracken.

I so present.

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

Mr. Wall: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure today to rise on behalf of constituents who are concerned on the issue of the education portion of property tax in Saskatchewan. The prayer of their petition:

Wherefore your petitioners humbly pray that your Hon. Assembly urge the provincial government to take all possible action to cause a reduction in the education tax burden carried by Saskatchewan residents and employers.

And, Mr. Speaker, all of the petitioners are from the city of Swift Current.

I so present.

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

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

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

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

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

I so present.

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

Mr. McMorris: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition to present on behalf of citizens in the Claybank area regarding the 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, the petition is signed by people from Avonlea, Lucky Lake, and Briercrest.

I so present.

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

Ms. Bakken: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to present a petition on behalf of constituents of Weyburn-Big Muddy who are very concerned about the closure or further downsizing of long-term care beds and the prayer reads:

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

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

And the petition is signed by residents of Radville, Tyvan, and Weyburn.

I so present.

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a petition with citizens opposed to the reductions of services to 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 Davidson, Imperial health centres be maintained at their current level of service at a minimum with 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 in Davidson, Imperial areas and beyond.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by good citizens from the town of Davidson.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also have a petition from the Springwater Hutterite Colony who are opposed to the possible reductions of the 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 the Biggar hospital, long-term care home, and ambulance service is maintained at the very least at the current level of services.

As in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Signed by the good citizens of Springwater Colony.

I so present.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — Mr. Speaker, again I rise in the Assembly to present a petition on behalf of residents 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 citizens of Denzil, Tramping Lake, Cactus Lake; Luseland, Saskatchewan; and Salvador.

I so present.

READING AND RECEIVING PETITIONS

Deputy Clerk: — According to order the following petitions have been reviewed and are hereby read and received as addendums to previously tabled petitions, being sessional paper nos. 106, 166, 167, 170, 180, and 182.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

The Speaker: — I recognize the Chair of the Standing Committee on Human Services.

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 30, The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration

in Committee of the Whole of this Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been requested by the minister to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole for Bill No. 30. 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. 30 — The Queen's Bench Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur la Cour du Banc de la Reine

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move the Bill be now read a third time and passed under its title.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 30 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 32, The Powers of Attorney Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall this Bill be considered in committee? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — 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 for Bill 32. 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. 32 — The Powers of Attorney Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur les procurations

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — 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 Justice that Bill No. 32 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Standing Committee on Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 39, The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — 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 for Bill 39. 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. 39 — The Enforcement of Maintenance Orders Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur l'exécution des ordonnances alimentaires

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — 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 Justice that Bill No. 39 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 Standing Committee on Human Services.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on Human Services

Ms. Junor: — Mr. Speaker, I'm instructed by the Standing Committee on Human Services to report Bill No. 24, The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Justice has requested leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of Bill 24. 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. 24 — The Provincial Court Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — 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 Justice that Bill No. 24 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Standing Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 28, The Public Employees Pension Plan 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 of Committee of the Whole on this Bill.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has requested leave to waive consideration of Committee of the Whole. 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. 28 — The Public Employees Pension Plan Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill 28 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Standing Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 16, The Geographic Names Board Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

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

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

The Speaker: — The Hon. Minister of Industry and Resources has requested leave for waive of consideration of Committee of the Whole. Is leave granted?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Leave has been granted. Then when shall this Bill be considered a third time?

THIRD READINGS

Bill No. 16 — The Geographic Names Board Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 16 now be read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Standing Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 17, The Department of Energy and Mines Amendment Act, 2004

without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 17 be considered in Committee of the Whole?

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I request leave to waive consideration in Committee of the Whole of this Bill. Thank you.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Industry and Resources has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 17 in Committee of the Whole. 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. 17 — The Department of Energy and Mines Amendment Act, 2004

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

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 17 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 chairman of the Standing Committee on the Economy.

PRESENTING REPORTS BY STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Standing Committee on the Economy

Mr. Lautermilch: — Mr. Speaker, I am instructed by the Standing Committee on the Economy to report Bill No. 22, The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2004 without amendment.

The Speaker: — When shall Bill 22 be considered in the Committee of the Whole? I recognize the Minister of Agriculture.

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

The Speaker: — The minister has requested leave to waive consideration of Bill 22 in Committee of the Whole. 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. 22 — The Saskatchewan Farm Security Amendment Act, 2004

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — 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 Agriculture and Food that Bill No. 22 be now read a third time and passed under its title. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

The Speaker: — 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 Kindersley.

Mr. Dearborn: — I give notice that I shall on day no. 51 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation: can the minister provide the classification, salaries, and geographic location of the 14 positions terminated in the last fiscal year?

And further to that, Mr. Speaker, while I'm on my feet, I give notice that I shall on day no. 51 ask the government the following question:

To the Minister of Culture, Youth and Recreation: can the minister provide the names of the 14 people whose jobs were terminated in the last fiscal year?

I so present.

INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantefoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this

afternoon it's my pleasure to introduce the delegation from the Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association seated in your gallery. Mr. Speaker, this delegation is headed up by their president, Mr. Dave Dutchak; Shirley Antonini, Jim Pollock, Krista Konders, Trevor Dutchak, Garry Towler, Ron Dufresne, Steve Skoworodko, and Lyle Moffatt.

They're here this afternoon, Mr. Speaker, to witness the second reading debate of Bill No. 59, amendments to The Ambulance Act. And I'd ask all members to welcome them here warmly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the government caucus, I, too, would like to welcome all of the members of SEMSA (Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association) here in the Assembly as we move forward with The Ambulance Act. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for — let's see — it's Cut Knife-Turtleford.

Mr. Chisholm: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise and through you to introduce 23 grade 8 students from Turtleford School in the east gallery. They are accompanied by their teachers, Colleen Nelson and Val McNinch, as well as chaperones, Debbie Gray, Val Spencer, Lane Therres, Clint Marsh, Brenda Johnson, Linda Knowlton, and Stuart Macnab. Mr. Speaker, it seems like an inordinate number of chaperones required for 23 students.

We welcome our Turtleford visitors to their legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(13:45)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources, the member for Saskatoon Massey Place.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to other members of the Assembly, some very important guests seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this week is Mining Week in Saskatchewan. And as we all know, the mining industry is very important for our province. Mining is the third largest sector of our economy, and employs over 20,000 people directly and indirectly.

Joining us today to mark the launch of Mining Week in Saskatchewan are representatives of the Saskatchewan Mining Association. I would ask each of them to stand as I read their names. We have Norm Beug, the past president of the Saskatchewan Mining Association; Mr. Bruce Lambert, the second vice-president; Moe Davyduke, member at large; and Ghislaine McLeod, of the Public Awareness Committee; and also Mr. Phil Reeves, the executive director.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all members to join with me in welcoming these representatives of Saskatchewan's mining industry in honour of Mining Week, and invite all members and anyone watching at home to take part in the many interesting Mining Week events taking place all over Saskatchewan and to remember, mining is good for Saskatchewan. Thank you.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And on behalf of the official opposition, I would like to, as well, join the minister in welcoming this group to the legislature. This is in fact a very important sector of our economy. And we look forward to meeting with this group shortly, and welcome to your legislature.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, seated in your gallery is a very small group of grade 12 students from Balfour Collegiate in Regina. They're here today accompanied by their teacher Karen Jackson. And although they're a very small group, they're a significant group because they're here every year to see the proceedings, Mr. Speaker. And I would like to introduce them to you and through you to all of the members, and ask all the members to join with me in extending them, again, a warm welcome. Thank you very much.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's my privilege to introduce a group of people in the east gallery, specifically 14 students from grades 7, 8, and 9 from the North Star School in Hyas, Saskatchewan. And along with the students is their teacher, Vicki Goossen, and along with the students are a number of chaperones, so this is fairly large group. I want to introduce Grant and Trudy Penner, Rodney and Aldine Goossen, Charles and Donald Goossen, and Shauna Reimer.

And I'd ask all members to join with me in welcoming this group to Regina and to the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

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

Saskatchewan Mining Week

Mr. Borgerson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, mining is Saskatchewan's third largest industry behind gas and oil and agriculture. The use of advanced technology makes Saskatchewan one of the most competitive and productive

mining sectors in the world. This makes Saskatchewan Mining Week, from May 31 to June 5, as much a celebration of new science as it is about old rocks.

Innovative advances in Saskatchewan mining include the application of robotics to improve safety at the mining face, the development and utilization of solution mining techniques to recover potash, and the development of freeze technology to mine unstable ground.

Every year Saskatchewan produces \$2.4 billion worth of minerals including coal, gold, sodium sulphate, copper, zinc, and, Mr. Speaker, the potential of diamonds in the future. The mineral sector provides employment for 20,000 people in Saskatchewan.

This year's theme to mining week is Employee Health and Wellness, and the Saskatchewan Mining Association is hosting a number of activities including the highlighting of regional science fair winners at a launch event at the Royal Saskatchewan Museum today. Saskatchewan Mining Week will wrap up with a June 5 mine rescue competition as well as a banquet at the Prairieland Park in Saskatoon.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to recognize those who work in the mining industry for their contribution to this province's economy and for their continued dedication to creating a safer workplace.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Lloydminster.

Mr. Wakefield: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this Saskatchewan Mining Week and following an earlier introduction, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the official opposition to take note of the provincial mining week in Saskatchewan.

It should be no secret to anyone that mining is one of the most important industries in our province's economy, and certainly one of our greatest sources of employment.

In 2003 the total value of mineral sales from Saskatchewan mining industry was again in excess of \$2 billion — \$2 billion. Likewise in 2003, the mining industry spent an additional \$2 billion on wages, goods, and services, which has enormous impact on our economy. As well, it paid into the provincial treasury hundreds of millions of dollars in royalties to help us better fund important services such as health and education.

Mr. Speaker, we are already the world leader in potash and the world leader in uranium mining, and there are exciting new developments on the horizon. The mining industry is a testament to how important private sector investment is in our economy and why we should be doing as much as we can to encourage even greater investment in Saskatchewan.

It is with great pleasure that I stand today and thank those who have invested in this industry, and it's a tremendous positive for our province and each and every citizen of Saskatchewan.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Grand Opening of Meadow Lake Oriented Strand Board Plant

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On Saturday myself, the Premier, and the Minister of Government Relations had the opportunity to attend and take part in the official opening of the Meadow Lake oriented strand board plant.

The Meadow Lake OSB Limited Partnership is an extraordinarily successful alliance between Tolko Industries, Northwest Community Wood Products, the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and, of course, the province of Saskatchewan.

The mill went into production in August of 2003 and has not looked back since. It is an incredible example of what can be accomplished when private industry, government, and Aboriginal communities work together, Mr. Speaker. And I'm proud to say it is the largest oriented strand board processing plant in the world.

Mr. Speaker, the new mill employs 120 people directly and another 120 indirectly in various woodlands operations such as harvesting, trucking, and silviculture.

Both John and Al Thorlakson of Tolko Industries were on hand for the grand opening, and they had nothing but positive things to say about the people and the Government of Saskatchewan, saying that they would not hesitate to reinvest more in our province, Mr. Speaker.

I think such kind words are an amazing testimonial to both the greatness of the people of Saskatchewan and the great things our government is doing. Please join me in congratulating all the partners of this highly successful venture. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Eileen McRae Honoured at Air Cadet Review Ceremony in Davidson

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past Saturday in Davidson I had the honour of attending the Saskatchewan Air Cadet review hosted by the local 553 Sherlock Squadron.

Her Honour, Lieutenant Governor Lynda Haverstock, conducted the military review and bestowed honours on certain cadets for high conduct. The ceremony was well attended with over 200 people.

Significant of those being honoured was Mrs. Eileen McRae who has worked closely with the cadet movement since 1985 as supply officer, administration officer for the Sherlock Squadron. Her countless volunteer hours were richly appreciated by the cadet leadership and the many youths she'd assisted and counselled over the past 20 years. I had the distinct honour of presenting Mrs. McRae with a Certificate of

Achievement on behalf of the Arm River-Watrous constituency and the Government of Saskatchewan.

Mrs. McRae's community service goes beyond the bounds of the air cadet league to include 4-H instructor for 10 years, since 1973-83, as well as being actively involved in the Catholic Willing Workers organization from 1976 to present, as well as an active member of the Royal Canadian Legion in Davidson since 1989.

I would ask all members to join me congratulating Mrs. Eileen McRae on her outstanding level of voluntary service to the air cadets, the community of Davidson. Thank you.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

World No Tobacco Day

Mr. Addley: — Mr. Speaker, today is World No Tobacco Day. This is a day to raise public awareness about the harmful effects of smoking and to develop ways we can work together as communities, cities, and governments to help foster a healthier society.

Mr. Speaker, tobacco use is the most significant preventable cause of disease, disability, and premature death in Canada. Tobacco kills three times more Canadians each year than alcohol, AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome), illegal drugs, car accidents, suicide, and murder — all combined. Exposure to second-hand tobacco smoke also poses serious risk to health.

Mr. Speaker, World No Tobacco Day has special meaning for us this year. It comes less than three weeks after our government introduced The Tobacco Control Amendment Act, 2004, an Act that calls for Saskatchewan to be smoke-free by January 1, 2005.

Today my colleague, the Minister of Health, is extending a special thank you to the five municipalities of Moose Jaw, Humboldt, Yorkton, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert for their contribution to tobacco reduction in Saskatchewan by providing leadership in developing smoke-free bylaws prior to the introduction of The Tobacco Control Amendment Act.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to recognize the Canadian Cancer Society, the Saskatchewan Coalition for Tobacco Reduction, the Saskatchewan Lung Association and the Heart and Stroke Foundation for working tirelessly in defence of those who have been exposed to second-hand and first-hand smoke. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Rural Sports Hall of Fame Induction Dinner at Indian Head

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

inform the Assembly of a busy weekend that has just passed in the beautiful, mind you wet, community of Indian Head.

On Friday night, the member for Moosomin and I were able attend the 9th annual Rural Sports Hall of Fame Induction Dinner in Indian Head where eight individual or teams were inducted.

Mr. Speaker, this dinner is really quite a unique dinner where you'll see people going into the Rural Sports Hall of Fame that have gained international fame, national fame, right down to the person that's helped out with a local softball team being inducted. And this year was no different.

Mr. Speaker, a couple of people of note that were inducted into this year's Sports Hall of Fame were George Beach, formerly from Indian Head, and became a national star in Great Britain through his hockey playing abilities, as well as the Eddie Shore family from the Cupar area that were inducted, right along to the Glenavon Pipers — the 1963, '64, and '65 Glenavon Pipers, who won the provincial title as well as many league championships.

Congratulations to the inductees, but even more importantly congratulations to Ken McCabe and his induction dinner committee that put on this fine evening.

As well as attending that on Saturday, I had the opportunity of attending four businesses that held grand openings — the Indian Head vet clinic, friendly dog photography, the Indian Head plumbing and heating company, as well as Webster meats.

And one plug, Mr. Speaker, for Webster meats. They have a great bison T-bone. If anybody's passing through Indian Head, stop by Webster meats; they have a great T-bone. Congratulations.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Rainbow Youth Centre

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Mr. Speaker, last Friday my colleague from Regina Dewdney and I had the opportunity to attend the Rainbow Youth Centre's comedy dinner and silent auction.

Mr. Speaker, the evening was a great success with about 400 people attending to support the good work being done by the Rainbow Youth Centre. We heard from some of the youth who spoke positively about how the centre has been a safe place where they find support and the encouragement they need to succeed in their lives.

Mr. Speaker, the centre has been operating since 1982, working with young people between the ages of 11 and 25, offering them a variety of services from individual and group counselling to skills development and educational, recreational, and direct service programs, all designed to meet the needs of our youth as they grow, develop, and change.

Mr. Speaker, the Rainbow Youth Centre is all about creating

strong and healthy communities by supporting the development of strong and healthy individuals. I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking all the participants and sponsors of last Friday's event and in acknowledging everyone involved with the Rainbow Youth Centre for their commitment to community and to young people. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

ORAL QUESTIONS

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Changes to The Ambulance Act

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health. The government recently introduced Bill 59, a Bill that drastically changes The Ambulance Act. Mr. Speaker, by changing the terms of contracts, operators will no longer be able to provide their bankers with the long-term forecasting necessary to secure financing for capital expenditures for equipment and ambulance fleets.

My question, Mr. Speaker, is: why is the NDP government jeopardizing the ability of ambulance operators to do business in this province?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(14:00)

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what we're doing in this legislation, which will come forward into this forum for debate, is to have the ambulance operators and how they operate use the same accountability rules of all health care organizations throughout the province, including various affiliated organizations.

And so this is not something that is different. It's something that other groups are able to use, and we plan to make sure that it provides the ability for ambulance operators to continue to provide services across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister's rhetoric sounds all well and good, but the reality, the simple reality is that Bill 59 will severely compromise ambulance operators' ability to do business. Dismantling The Ambulance Act little by little is not the answer.

These changes will diminish the value of long-term businesses who have faithfully provided a necessary service to our communities and continue to do so. Without secure contracts, they can expect a dramatic loss on their investment should they ever try to sell their businesses. Understandably this NDP government wouldn't understand such a thing.

Why is this government trying to destroy the public-private

partnership that the emergency medical services have provided in Saskatchewan?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, what will happen for the ambulance operators is that they will be designated as health care organizations and therefore will be able to provide services and receive government funding under The Regional Health Services Act, and that will be the same as many other groups in the province that are designated that way, who provide services. They get funding they need for their operations, and they continue to provide good service throughout the province.

Mr. Speaker, this will happen as contracts are renewed, and many of the contracts have quite a number of years in it. The plan is to have an orderly transition to the new system. And we intend to do it in a way that provides good emergency medical services for the people across the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, this legislation will destabilize and demoralize the entire industry and jeopardize patient care, especially at a time when rural people have valid concerns about their ability to access emergency services.

The Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association has communicated their concerns and is prepared to work with the government to improve the accountability mechanisms within the current legislation. Last year this government dropped important legislation that would allow paramedics to self-regulate because of concerns raised by one localized group. Now this government wants to ignore the major stakeholders that this legislation will affect. Mr. Speaker, why is this government refusing to listen to the concerns expressed by the Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, I've had discussions with representatives of the Emergency Medical Services Association, and approximately half of their members are private contractors which relate to the questions that the member opposite raises. The other half are services that are provided by the regional health authorities themselves. And they end up having some different issues within their own organization.

Mr. Speaker, what we are doing is we want to make sure that the whole system is accountable, that it works together, and that it works in a way that provides full details to all people in the province who provide the money for the services. We're going to do that, and we're going to do it in an organized fashion. And we're going to work together with this organization and all their members.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Mr. Speaker, the minister should know that SEMSA represents both public and contracted EMS (emergency medical services) providers, and they have, on behalf of their members, expressed their concern to this government both personally and in writing. And this minister has chosen to ignore those representations.

Mr. Speaker, these proposed amendments will have an adverse effect on the EMS operations and impede the ability to have a sustainable EMS system for Saskatchewan citizens. These people have invested in our communities to provide a necessary and important service to Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, despite the minister's saying that he has met with these people and listened to them, will he meet in a meaningful way with the SEMSA representatives to work out a positive way of serving the people of Saskatchewan in the EMS system?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, one of the things that we are also doing with this legislation is responding to a resolution put forward by the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities in the year 2000. And one of my predecessor ministers of Health said that in the process of reviewing ambulance services across the province, that this is one of the issues that we would be looking at, which is around how the accountability of the whole system works.

Mr. Speaker, we've responded to that in a number of different ways. We've worked with the people who are providing these services across the province. Our goal is to continue to provide good services across the province in an accountable way, and we are going to do that.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Closure of Long-Term Care Beds

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People in the Davidson area are very concerned about the NDP's (New Democratic Party) plan to shut down 10 long-term care beds at Davidson Health Centre. They're also very appalled that these closures and job losses were made without first consulting with the very people whose lives are going to be affected by these decisions.

Mr. Speaker, the mayor of Davidson has written to the Chair of Human Services Committee. He says, and I quote:

I am most concerned that the Davidson Town Council nor the community at large was consulted in any way prior to this major decision on our local health services.

Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Party has presented a motion calling for the Human Services Committee to hold public meetings in the affected areas. The mayor of Davidson has written to the committee to support this proposal. Would the

Premier support our motion and allow public hearings to take place before these closures and job losses take effect?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a similar question that was asked by some other members from some other parts of the province last week. And what we are going to do, Mr. Speaker, is work with the regional health authorities and work with the processes they have in place around going ahead with some of the decisions that we've made in our budget decisions around health care. And what we're going to continue to do, Mr. Speaker, is identify those kinds of places where changes need to be made because there will be changes.

In this particular case we have a wing of the Davidson facility which is quite old and which is not up to the standards we use today. That part will be closed; they will use other parts. But it will be done in a way that reflects the residents who are there and will be provided within that Heartland Health Region in an appropriate way.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Well thank you, Mr. Speaker. The mayor of Girvin has written a similar letter to the committee Chair calling for public hearings. He says, and I quote:

I believe that input from my office and area residents should have been gathered before . . . (the) decision (to) impact our community.

Mr. Speaker, the people in these communities are just asking for a chance to be heard, for a chance to tell their side of the story, to find out exactly what the government is going out there. With public meetings, maybe . . . there is a strong fear out there that there's going to be more bed closures and people are going to be moved out of them, particular of that hospital, Mr. Speaker.

Before the NDP shuts down these beds, will he at least come out and consult and talk to the people out there? If the Premier is so confident in his plan for health care, why is he refusing to allow public hearings in communities like Davidson?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, there are many challenges in health care in our province and right across the country. And we will continue to work at those problems on a local basis and on a national basis as the Minister of Finance and I were doing yesterday in Toronto. And what we will continue to do, Mr. Speaker, is understand what kinds of services are required in various communities. But there will be changes that will be made because it's necessary to do that.

And what we promise, Mr. Speaker, is to make the most effective use of the dollars that we provide for health care services right across this province, and we're going to continue to do that Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Brkich: — Well if you're willing to make these changes, you should be willing to come out to these communities to tell these people what's happening with these changes out there. You owe that . . .

The Speaker: — Order. I would ask the member to make all his remarks through the Chair.

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The minister and this government owes it to those people out there to tell them about the changes because right now they don't know what's happening out there. There is rumours out there that there's going to be more bed closures, more job losses. Will they . . . if they're so confident, will they at least come out, Mr. Speaker, and meet and talk to the people so they can talk about their concerns?

There's a senior citizens group right now fighting to save their beds; I'll do a quote what they have in the paper:

All of us are concerned. We are all over 80 and we want to stay in our own town . . .

Along with the bed closures, four full-time equivalency positions at the health centre will be lost.

Here we are trying to increase the population of Davidson and what are they doing — (they're) getting rid of jobs and forcing people to move out of town . . .

Mr. Speaker, my question again to the Premier, will he allow public meetings out in the affected areas of these closures?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Mr. Speaker, on April 30 the member from Melfort, the opposition critic for Health, was asked this question by a reporter: Is the Sask Party categorically opposed to any closures or conversions? And the member answered, no, we haven't said that. We said that we would look at all of these issues on their merits. That would be, look at the statistics.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker, is we're working with the regional health authorities across the province to understand how things will change in particular communities. And, Mr. Speaker, it's a challenge, but we're going to do that because that's what the people have asked us to do is to provide the best health care services we can in this province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Radisson's School Closure

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, my question's for the Minister of Learning. Just a few weeks ago the minister announced what he called an historic reorganization of K to 12 (kindergarten to grade 12) education. The minister also announced a two-year moratorium on school closures beginning on September 1. Unfortunately that is six days too late for the families in the town of Radisson because the Saskatoon West School Division has announced that Radisson School will be closed on August 25.

Mr. Speaker, parents in Radisson are holding a public meeting tonight. They want the ministers to stop the closure and include the Radisson School in the moratorium. Will the minister join me in Radisson tonight to explain why he thinks the Radisson School should not be part of the moratorium on school closures and the NDP's so-called historic reorganization of K to 12 education?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — Mr. Speaker, the situation in Radisson is one that has been going on now for some time as the Saskatoon West school board tries to configure its school system. In particular this issue is about whether the students should be bused from Radisson to Borden or whether it should go the opposite way.

The discussion that has been going on within the Saskatoon West division is a mature one. It's been going on for some time, and as a result it is now at that final stage. We respect the board's autonomy in this matter, and as a result of the nature of that discussion and the length of it, the moratorium has been set to take effect after this year's round of school closures.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Biggar.

Mr. Weekes: — Mr. Speaker, if the Radisson School closes in August, 70 students will be bused to school in another community. Mr. Speaker, families in the town of Radisson are having a hard time understanding that decision since even the director of the Saskatoon West School Division admits Radisson School is a nice school, where the school division has spent thousands of dollars in the last few years upgrading it.

And those same parents are lobbying the NDP government to move Radisson into the Battlefords School Division — a move they believe will save their school. Will the minister join me in Radisson tonight to listen to parents, students and residents who are trying to save their school?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Learning.

Hon. Mr. Thomson: — I fear that the member opposite is of the mistaken view that the minister of Education, the Minister of Learning actually makes the decision about school closures. In fact those decisions are made at a local level by the local boards. The moratorium, we have asked the boards to respect

for the next two years, during the transition period, not to undertake that.

We were very clear in making that announcement. Understand that it would not impact those closures which were on the books for this year. Members opposite knew that. We have made this point repeatedly. These issues are difficult ones, and indeed I trust that the Saskatoon West School Division has made them in the best interests of students.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Amendment to By-Election Legislation

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, in the early 1990s the NDP were very critical of the Devine administration for refusing to call a number of by-elections in the last two years of its term. NDP Justice minister Bob Mitchell called it, and I quote: "... a situation that cannot be tolerated in a democracy." And the Romanow government introduced legislation to ensure that the premier must call a by-election within six months of the seat becoming vacant.

(14:15)

Last week, this Premier introduced legislation that will partially repeal Romanow's legislation so that if a seat becomes vacant three years or more after the last election, the Premier's under no obligation to call a by-election.

Mr. Speaker, this change will allow this Premier to do exactly what he criticized the former government of doing. Why is the Premier trying to weasel out of calling by-elections?

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member from Cannington wants to talk about the Devine era. I'll tell you the difference between this government and their government in the Devine era, is that we tend to have to general provincial elections on or about the four-year anniversary — that's the difference. You don't see this government hanging on to power for five years or a day past five years like that group did, Mr. Speaker.

Well the fact of the matter is, at the level of experience that we've had with by-elections running up close to the four-year anniversary, what has happened is because of our law, we're putting constituencies through two, two elections within a number of months. We want to solve that, Mr. Speaker. It is this government that has put the spirit of timely by-elections and timely elections into place, and this legislation will continue that practice.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, the Premier says on or about. I think we've heard a number of statements from the Premier that were not quite as

accurate when he said them to when he actually came to act, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier was very critical of the former administration on this very issue. On July 10, 19... excuse me, 2002, the Premier stood in this House and roundly condemned the former government for letting the seats of Kindersley, Indian Head-Wolseley, Turtleford, and Souris-Cannington remain vacant for over a year. And yet, Mr. Speaker, each one of those seats became vacant after the three-year mark of the former administration.

This means the Premier's new legislation would allow him to do exactly the same thing that the Devine government was doing. Mr. Speaker, why the hypocrisy? Why is this Premier doing exactly what he condemned former Premier Devine for doing?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, the member of Cannington seems to have a slip in his memory here. It was the Devine government — his friend, Mr. Devine — who refused to call an election in the province of Saskatchewan for five years and one day. One more day, the Lieutenant Governor would have had to do it. And not much wonder — it was not just this member, at that time serving for Moose Jaw, who was critical of that government. It was the vast majority of Saskatchewan people.

Mr. Speaker, here is the record. Here is the record of the Sask Party in government. They had a by-election in Kindersley. They waited 22 months to call a by-election in Kindersley. They had a by-election out there in Indian Head-Wolseley. They waited 21 months — 21 months. They had a by-election up in Turtleford. They waited 16... You know, Mr. Speaker, why they had all those by-elections? Because those members were jumping off that ship fast as they could get off it, and they didn't want to go back to the people.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we put in legislation to ensure timely by-elections. We've made a commitment to the people of Saskatchewan that there will be timely general elections. And for the combination of those two, we think this change to the legislation is appropriate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, while the Premier is changing his tune from 2002 to today, there is one thing the Premier is right on when he says the Sask Party government, Mr. Speaker. He's talking like a prophet.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Mr. Speaker, this legislation might make some sense if we had set election dates, but we don't. The last two NDP governments went more than four years without calling an election.

This government can go up to five years, Mr. Speaker. That means the people in some constituencies could be without representation for up to two years or more. That's undemocratic. It's something that this Premier criticized, but now he's setting himself up to do exactly the same thing.

The Premier strongly criticized the Devine government for leaving voters without representation, and now he's giving himself exactly this same right. Why the double standard?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, I hear a great deal of envy in the voices opposite because — you know what, Mr. Speaker? — they will never get to call an election in the province.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now the fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the violation, the violation of the principle of honour about the four-year anniversary, the violation has always come from that group of men and women opposite, Mr. Speaker. Now the fact of the matter is when you approach that fourth anniversary and there is cause . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please. Order, please, members. I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Now the fact of the matter is, Mr. Speaker, when you run up close to that four-year anniversary and there is cause for a by-election, it is an onerous responsibility on constituencies to run two elections within the course of several weeks or months, Mr. Speaker. I think people with common sense in Saskatchewan recognize that. They've said that to this government, and we're willing to make the change, Mr. Speaker. We're willing to make the change.

Now, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, one wants to be very, very careful when the member of Cannington's on his feet. The last time I think he was on his feet in this House he was talking about sandbags from the Wascana Lake.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the only people sandbagging this Premier with comments are his backbenchers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this isn't just a hypothetical . . .

The Speaker: — Order please, members. Order please, members. Let's . . . Order please. Let's try it one at a time. The member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This isn't just a hypothetical situation. Prior to the 1999 election, there were three by-elections that were held, seats that were vacant and by-elections held, all within the last . . . after the three-year mark, Mr. Speaker. Prior to the 2003 election, there were three more by-elections in seats that were vacant, all that became

vacant after the three-year mark, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, is the Premier saying those people don't deserve representation? That's what he's saying under the new rules. Mr. Speaker, the Premier can still call by-elections if the NDP think they can win the seat, but he can avoid calling by-elections if the NDP think they are going to lose, Mr. Speaker. Isn't that what this is all about? Just one more rule for the Premier to manipulate to his advantage?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Mr. Speaker, this is somewhat hollow coming from this group of men and women. You know last . . . Only six or eight months ago they were saying that this government would never call an election because we were afraid to go to the people. Well then you know . . . Oh yes, afraid to go. We went to the people, and the people gave this government a majority government for the fourth straight term, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people did — four straight terms.

Now, Mr. Speaker, one wants in electoral law, like everything else, to apply some common sense. We have had a tradition and a record — at least when New Democrats are in government in this province — of having five-year elections, contrary to what they did when they were in government, Mr. Speaker.

Common sense says if you're putting constituencies through two elections in the course of months, that does not make good common sense. Mr. Speaker, we've put in place this law to correct, to correct the failings of that group when they were in government. We believe this maintains that law, and we will continue to work as New Democrats always have on a four-year election cycle.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well indeed this government was afraid to go to the polls, and so they used a fearmongering campaign to win. And the people out there now regret the decisions that they made, and they'd like to have a second chance at it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: — Order, please. Order, please, members. Let's be able to hear the entire question. Member from Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is saying he's not going to use this rule to his political advantage. He's not going to try and manipulate the timing of by-elections. And I heard a backbencher back there holler, trust me. Well, Mr. Speaker, why would anybody trust this Premier?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — Once more the Premier has been caught saying one thing and doing absolutely the opposite. He's doing what the former administration is setting up to do, is to avoid calling by-elections. This Premier said that was a terrible thing. But now he's giving himself exactly the same rights that he

criticized a former premier for doing.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier's words don't mean a thing. If he tells you good morning, check the position of the sun. Mr. Speaker, why the double standard?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — I recognize the Premier.

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — Well, well, Mr. Speaker, this may be the moment to remind members of this House of a commitment that I made to the current member of Swift Current who now sits as Leader of the Opposition, but who in those days sat as the Crown critic. I don't have the *Hansard* in front of me, but we could refer back to the *Hansard*. You'll recall it, Mr. Speaker, when I made a prediction and a commitment in this House that that man would be the Leader of the Opposition long before I was.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Mr. Calvert: — That commitment . . . (inaudible) . . . by the people of Saskatchewan, by the people of Saskatchewan was made accurate. Mr. Speaker, we put this package of legislation in place to correct the abuse of the system, the raw abuse of the system that was inflicted on the people of Saskatchewan by members opposite when they were in government. Mr. Speaker, they held for five years before they called a general election. They held by-elections off for 22 months until they were forced to have the election or the by-election. Mr. Speaker, this is the party, this is the government that has credibility when it comes to electoral reform.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

The Speaker: — Order, please, members. Once more now. Introduction of Bills.

Bill No. 67 — The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la réglementation des boissons alcoolisées et des jeux de hasard

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Industry and Resources.

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Industry and Resources that Bill No. 67, The Alcohol and Gaming Regulation Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Cline: — Next sitting, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 68 — The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Government Relations that Bill No. 68, The Assessment Management Agency Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

Bill No. 69 — The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 69, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read the first time.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 69, The Public Inquiries Amendment Act, 2004 be now introduced and read for the first time.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — First reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — Next sitting of the House.

The Speaker: — Next sitting.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WRITTEN QUESTIONS

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

Mr. Yates: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely pleased today to stand on behalf of the government and table responses to written questions no. 452 through 455 inclusive.

The Speaker: — Responses to 452, '53, '54, and 455 have been submitted.

(14:30)

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 55 — The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004.

Mr. Speaker, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 further demonstrates this government's commitment to quality improvements and increased accountability within the health care system as outlined in our Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care.

The Regional Health Services Act came into effect in 2002, Mr. Speaker, and changes have occurred since then requiring the Act to be updated. Amendments to the Act will provide greater clarity and assist regional health authorities and health care organizations with operational issues. The changes will also facilitate policy development and service delivery.

Mr. Speaker, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 provides the legislative authority to establish a diagnostic services registry to help further improve access to diagnostic services in our province. This will be an extension of the work that has already been accomplished to improve access to surgery through the Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network. The Saskatchewan Surgical Care Network has already earned nationwide recognition and there is every indication that it will continue to be used as a model by other jurisdictions. We plan to build on this significant work and apply what we have learned to the area of diagnostic services.

Mr. Speaker, other changes being made will simplify the process governing changes in membership to regional health authorities such as a resignation, death, or termination of a board member. Another amendment will permit the minister to issue guidelines and directions and operating agreements between regional health authorities and health care organizations. This will allow the department to establish a provincial model contract to ensure consistency between and within regional health authorities. As well, Mr. Speaker, there is a provision that allows the minister to issue directions respecting policies affecting regional health authority operations that will ensure greater consistency across the province.

Two sections of this Act are being changed, Mr. Speaker, with the intention of providing greater clarity respecting the processes for appointments, reappointments, privileging, and disciplining of practitioner staff that are addressed through practitioner staff bylaws and associated appeal processes. As well, the financial reporting provisions will be amended to ensure that the financial reporting provisions of the legislation are consistent with generally accepted accounting practices as set out by the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

Mr. Speaker, a section of this Act that is worth noting is the establishment of a framework for the formal reporting of critical incidents. Saskatchewan is the first jurisdiction in Canada to take this step, Mr. Speaker, placing us on the leading edge of developments in patient safety initiatives in the country. The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 provides clarification of terms to reflect reporting requirements for critical incidents to both regional health authorities and the minister. This will help improve safety within the health care system by having health care providers work together to find solutions to system-wide challenges and prevent similar incidents from happening in the future.

Mr. Speaker, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 not only provides changes to ensure clarity but also allows this government to move forward in key policy areas.

Mr. Speaker, I move second reading of The Regional Health Services Act, 2004.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No 55, The Regional Health Services Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 55, which is An Act to amend The Regional Health Services Act. Any time we see legislation that involves health care in Saskatchewan, in the official opposition we want to take a very close look at it because the quality of health care in this province has deteriorated and deteriorated extensively under the NDP government.

And, Mr. Speaker, we know that there is more pressure on the health care system today than we've ever seen in decades in this province. And therefore it requires very dutiful and very thorough examination of pieces of legislation brought forward

by an NDP government such as this legislation.

We've seen pressure on primary care; we're seeing pressure on regional health care in Saskatchewan; and we're seeing a great deal of pressure on the tertiary health care centres in our largest cities.

Mr. Speaker, the legislation has some impact on the registry for surgical procedures in the province of Saskatchewan, and we know that simply having a registry that tells us how far behind we are won't necessarily shorten waiting times for surgical procedures and other health care procedures in the province of Saskatchewan.

And so we want to make sure that the legislation brought forward by the Minister of Health will improve the quality of health care rather than continue to let it slide as it has under his watch and previous NDP health care ministers before him.

Mr. Speaker, in our health care system in Saskatchewan, we have never seen more dollars put into the health care system than we are seeing put into the health care system today. And yet we have never seen services reduced as quickly and as dramatically as they are being reduced today with the closure of acute care beds, with the closure of long-term care beds, Mr. Speaker, with health care professionals leaving the province in droves, and a critical shortage of health care professionals in many areas.

We also know that, Mr. Speaker, the number of nurses graduating and staying in Saskatchewan is at a critically low level. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, our opposition will be looking closely at this legislation. We will be consulting with the health care stakeholders and the users of our health care system to make sure that this Bill does not further deteriorate our health care as we've seen under the NDP administration up to this point in time.

It is for this reason, Mr. Speaker, that I would now move that we adjourn debate on Bill 55.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose that debate on second reading of Bill 55 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 56 — The Public Health Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Public Health Amendment Act, 2004. Since The Public Health Act was passed in 1994, the need for amendments has been identified to clarify or provide authority to address public health threats. Many of these

amendments are housekeeping in nature, Mr. Speaker, but they also are important because they either clarify intent or reflect common public health practice.

Mr. Speaker, examples of changes that are housekeeping in nature are as follows: defining the term medical laboratory, clarifying the term hamlet in relation to the provision of potable water and sewage systems, replacing the term Canadian Red Cross Society with Canadian Blood Services, and deleting an unproclaimed section of The Public Health Act which dealt with mandatory pasteurization of milk.

Mr. Speaker, other amendments resolve outstanding issues such as removing the need for a minister of Health and a regional health authority appointed as a local authority to approve bylaws relating to the setting of fees for plumbing permits or fluoridation of the water supply.

This amendment, Mr. Speaker, makes it clear that the local authority, or the regional health authority is responsible for administering regulations under The Public Health Act of 1994. This will then allow the local authority to request a municipality to abate a health hazard. This will recognize the local jurisdiction and responsibility of both the municipality and the health region.

There is also an amendment to make explicit the authority of the medical health officer of a regional health authority to issue an order to control certain public health hazards. This strengthens the role of the regional health authority's medical health officer to issue orders to control vector-borne diseases such as hantavirus and Lyme disease.

As well another change will provide clear authority to a medical health officer, with the approval of the chief medical health officer of the province, to issue an order to a person, municipal council, or a corporation to carry out an order to abate a serious public health threat. For example, an order could be issued to a person or a municipal council to carry out mosquito control programs, including adulticiding mosquitoes for West Nile virus.

As well, Mr. Speaker, another proposed amendment provides liability protection to a person or agency that carries out an order issued by a local authority, the medical health officer, or the minister, if that person or agency carries out that order in good faith.

Mr. Speaker, The Public Health Amendment Act, 2004 is important because it deletes unproclaimed sections or unnecessary provisions of the previous Act, clarifies and provides the authority to address public health threats that have risen in recent times, and makes it clear who is responsible for administering regulations under The Public Health Act, 1994.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 56, The Public Health Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Rosetown-Elrose.

Mr. Hermanson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And again it's my pleasure to respond to Bill 56, which is an Act dealing with . . . Public Health Amendment Act, an amendment of that Act. Mr. Speaker, again we in the official opposition will provide due diligence in reviewing this piece of legislation to see whether it meets the needs and provides the proper protection for Saskatchewan residents.

I've noticed, Mr. Speaker, just on initial examination of this legislation, that it will affect the regulation and supervision of water and sewage needs of very small communities, and of course this is a great concern. It's been a real problem in a number of smaller communities in the province of Saskatchewan where some onerous regulations for health safety in drinking water and sewage is placed upon the communities and they're not given the resources or the ability to meet those needs.

Mr. Speaker, it's put some communities in a very exasperating situation of not being able to comply with the requirements to provide healthy and safe potable water and proper sewage systems. I'm not sure yet, upon initial examination, whether the legislation brought forward by the Minister of Health today will help these communities to deal with these needs. If it doesn't, then, Mr. Speaker, the legislation is not complete and the government, the NDP government, still has a responsibility to do more in this area.

Also I notice that the legislation has impact on communicable diseases and diseases in the water supply that by . . . or in water that might be created by mosquitoes. And as we know, last year was a terrible year for Saskatchewan as far as West Nile virus is concerned; we had more cases of West Nile virus in Saskatchewan than any province in Canada. It would appear that the NDP government was not prepared to deal with this kind of a crisis, this kind of a situation. We're trusting, hoping that the worst is past and we won't have to deal with a situation as serious in the upcoming mosquito season.

But, Mr. Speaker, we'll be reviewing this legislation to see if it provides more solutions and more, more mechanisms and ways to fight diseases like West Nile and give communities some assurance that the government is on top of these kind of issues before they get out of hand like they did last summer.

So therefore, Mr. Speaker, we'll review Bill 56 to see how it impacts the people of Saskatchewan. Again we'll discuss this legislation with stakeholders and people involved in public health, municipalities. They're also involved in ensuring that their citizens have availability of safe water, proper sewage systems, and protection from diseases such as West Nile virus.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I would also adjourn debate . . . move to adjourn debate on Bill 56.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Rosetown-Elrose that debate on second reading of Bill 56 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 59 — The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Health.

Hon. Mr. Nilson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move second reading of The Ambulance Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004 is being introduced to provide more consistent accountability and reporting requirements for ambulance providers across the province.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill repeals redundant and obsolete sections of The Ambulance Act and aligns new reporting requirements under The Regional Health Services Act. These changes show that ambulance service providers have been and will continue to be an integral part of our health system.

Mr. Speaker, often a person's first contact with the health care system begins as soon as an emergency service provider arrives at their side. The quality service they provide must be supported and we believe these changes accomplish that goal.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, some health regions provide ambulance services directly while others have contracted ambulance providers. This can result in variations in reporting information and in the accountability requirements between regions.

This amendment will repeal sections concerning ambulance provider contracts and will allow ambulance providers to be prescribed as health care organizations, providing services that will be subject to service agreement requirements in The Regional Health Services Act.

The current ambulance operator contracts will remain in effect until their terms expire and will be considered for renewal. Contracted ambulance operators will be accountable in the same way as other health care organizations. They will be required to report critical incidents as part of a system-wide approach to improved quality and accountability. This will continue to ensure service and safety for those using ambulance services in Saskatchewan.

(14:45)

Mr. Speaker, this Act will also repeal obsolete sections of The Ambulance Act relating to ambulance boards and ambulance districts, as they no longer exist. Sections referring to air ambulance services will also be repealed, as the authority is already established under The Regional Health Services Act.

As was stated in the Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care, 2001, we will introduce provincial regulations for road ambulance fees to ensure greater consistency across the province. Mr. Speaker, The Ambulance Amendment Act will help us work toward the establishment of a new ambulance fee structure.

Mr. Speaker, this consistency in reporting and accountability is part of the foundation upon which we will continue to improve emergency services in Saskatchewan and ensure that they are sustainable into the future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move second reading of The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Health that Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Melfort.

Mr. Gantfoer: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's with pleasure that I rise today and speak to the proposed amendments to The Ambulance Act that the minister is proposing.

Mr. Speaker, this minister stands in the House day after day expounding upon how much consultation and communication that he and his department undertake in order to make the necessary changes to the health care system to provide a better health care system.

And today again the minister said in answer to questions that he has listened to and consulted with the Emergency Medical Services Association and the providers of this health care. And as we speak, Mr. Speaker, the president of that association is out in the rotunda explaining to the people of Saskatchewan why he finds this Act so objectionable to their association. How much of a disconnect does not that indicate between this minister and the health care system generally?

Mr. Speaker, the ambulance association of Saskatchewan has worked tirelessly to provide a quality service, not only to contracted providers but also the public providers. And SEMSA, their professional organization, represents both aspects of the industry.

And they have tirelessly over the years since I've been the Health critic been at the very forefront of making suggestions and creating opportunities and a willingness to dialogue with the Department of Health and this government in order to improve the services that are provided. On a consistent basis, year after year, they have stood in this province and indicated that they're willing to always achieve a higher level of professionalism and sustainability for the system in Saskatchewan.

And here now the minister is saying, never mind what you folks have said, never mind what your association has proposed, never mind the fact that this association has said publicly and to the minister that if the issues are accountability and reporting, and some of the other technical aspects that the minister talked about in his remarks, we're willing to sit down with you and address those concerns. Because we want, as an association of professionals supplying critical care to the province of Saskatchewan, we want to provide those services consistently across the province — contracted or public providers — at the highest level possible, for the good of the people of Saskatchewan and the health care system. This has been their message consistently, year after year.

Mr. Speaker, last year when the paramedics wanted to have the right to run their own professional association, because there was one discordant voice from firefighters, primarily in Saskatoon, the minister pulled the legislation. And he said, until

we get more conformity and more unanimity across the industry, we're not going to have this legislation come forward. Well how ironic is it now that this minister is determined to have this legislation move forward in light of the fact that SEMSA, who represents both public and contracted providers, are saying, we have grave concerns about what this is going to mean for our industry.

Why will this minister not sit — and not just exchange letters, not just sort of have token hearing of their concerns — but sit down in a meaningful way and discuss these issues with this industry? The industry has said that we will deal with the issues of professionalism; we want to deal with them; we want to improve the industry and the quality of the industry. They have said, we'll want to deal with the reporting and accountability issues. They've said that publicly and they've said it to the minister directly. And the minister simply refuses to listen to what impact this legislation is going to have on this industry.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand if this NDP government doesn't understand these issues, because heaven knows they have little enough experience about the trials and tribulations of trying to run the services in this province unless it's automatically in the public sector. But here you have a very healthy blend of both kinds of service deliveries, trying to make sure that the highest level of standards are maintained.

But they don't understand what it means to go in front of a banker and explain to him that you may or may not have a long-term sustainable contract that you can rely on when you go and need to spend the money to buy a new ambulance, or you have to spend money to equip those ambulances, or you have to train your professionals. Any of those issues have monetary concerns. And these individuals have to go in front of lending institutions and convince them that they're going to have that contract long enough to amortize those costs.

They don't understand, Mr. Speaker, that if you suddenly put in jeopardy long-term standing contracts that have lived up to the full extent of the expectations of those contracts in terms of professionalism and reliability and accountability, because you can no longer count on those long-term contracts the potential value of the business you worked so hard — in many instances, family businesses — those businesses that you worked so hard to build and maintain at the highest level of professionalism can be put into jeopardy. Mr. Speaker, this government simply doesn't understand that and I realize that that may be a truth.

But what I can't understand is why this government steadfastly refuses to speak to these individuals in a meaningful way and to accommodate their concerns so that both sides — the people concerned with providing these services and the hidebound elitist kind of attitude of the Department of Health — can't be accommodated so that whatever the concerns are as expressed by the minister can be achieved in a more attainable and a more sustainable way for the future of health care in this province.

Mr. Speaker, it's not many days ago that the government announced some pretty significant changes to conversions and closures of facilities in rural Saskatchewan. And they said that this is only the step that we're taking at this time. And rural Saskatchewan is very concerned about what's to follow because certainly the government, by the numbers they were looking for

of saving in the budget, had a much more draconian plan prepared at budget day that they thankfully have backed away from.

But the heart and soul of medical services, especially in the advent of trauma is going to be provided by the EMS system in these communities. And at this time when there is a fair bit of destabilization of the health care system, particularly in rural Saskatchewan, this is certainly not any time to destabilize the EMS system in this province as well.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope that this government will sit down with the representatives of the Saskatchewan Emergency Medical Services Association and have a meaningful dialogue, which means listening and being willing to accept the recommendations of this association in amending this legislation. And in order for them to have the opportunity to do that, in order for this dialogue hopefully to occur — because they know SEMSA stands ready, willing, and able to undertake that dialogue — Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Melfort that debate on second reading Bill No. 59, The Ambulance Amendment Act, be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 60 — The Public Service Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission.

Hon. Ms. Atkinson: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to present to the House for second reading, legislative amendments to The Public Service Act, 1998.

These amendments will help ensure the continuing smooth functioning of personnel administration within government, and consistency with collective bargaining agreements. They will also create consistency between The Public Service Act and The Labour Standards Act with respect to employees taking leave to serve in political office.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to section 27 is a routine administrative change which allows for the delegation of suspensions by the permanent head within his or her department. This will enable better administration in government field offices, particularly with respect to managing the performance of out-of-scope employees. This amendment is consistent with the provision for suspensions for in-scope employees under the SGEU (Saskatchewan Government and General Employees' Union) collective agreement.

The amendments to section 31 are likewise administrative. They will re-establish the authority of the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations prescribing how positions

excluded from the application of the Act are to be dealt with. This corrects an inadvertent omission when revisions were made in 1998.

The amendments to section 33(3) and (4) will create consistency between The Public Service Act and The Labour Standards Act by removing restrictions imposed on employees of executive government.

A transitional clause has been created to allow for the repeal of this section to apply to current sitting members of the Legislative Assembly. These amendments will enable employees to take leaves of absence to serve as elected officials. Instead of being deemed to have resigned their employment upon election to the provincial Legislative Assembly, they'll be granted leave so as to enable their return to their jobs with no loss of privilege at the end of their tenure in elected office, in accordance with the provisions of The Labour Standards Act.

These amendments will make the treatment of public service employees consistent with the treatment of employees in other sectors, and will enhance consistency in provincial legislation. This is consistent with legislation in several other provinces and will ensure equity among all workers who wish to serve in public office, and to ensure that none are faced with more significant employment consequences.

Mr. Speaker, I now present the legislative amendments to The Public Service Act for second reading.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister Responsible for the Public Service Commission that Bill No. 60, The Public Service Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

I recognize the member for Kelvington-Wadena.

Ms. Draude: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill No. 60, The Public Service Act. We understand this Bill has three provisions that are being affected, and the first one allowing a designate to suspend, without pay, a permanent employee in a department for a length of time that is considered appropriate. We understand that some of these decisions will obviously affect the efficiency and the effectiveness of the department, and it's something that I imagine should be looked at with excitement by a lot of the individuals that are employed within our public service.

The second part of this amendment allows a correction of an omission the last time the Act was opened. So again it's something that I am sure that we will have an opportunity to discuss with some of the people that will be impacted.

The third provision actually allows people the opportunity to run in a provincial election, which is something of course that many of us here feel honoured when we have the responsibility to represent people in our constituencies. I understand that this Act actually will allow them to have the same type of standards as The Labour Standards Act. Right now there's two different readings within these Acts and of course they are conflicting. So this will give us an opportunity to correct that oversight.

Mr. Speaker, the many men and women that are valuable to this province when it comes to helping run the province need the attention of this Act, and we look forward to bringing it to them to discuss.

And so at this time I would adjourn debate on this Bill.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Kelvington-Wadena that second reading debate on Bill No. 60 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 61 — The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004

The Speaker: — I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I rise today to move second reading of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act. Mr. Speaker, section 40.3 of The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act currently requires a by-election to be held within six months of the creation of a vacancy in the Assembly regardless of when in the government's mandate that vacancy occurs.

This Bill provides that the existing requirement for a by-election to be held within six months of a vacancy having been created in the Assembly will only apply within the first 36 months after a general election.

Mr. Speaker, the current provision could give rise to the situation where a resignation or death creates a vacancy late in the term of a government that would compel both a by-election and a general election be held in that constituency in an inappropriately short period of time.

While the Act does provide that any by-election writ would be voided by the subsequent dissolution of the Assembly for a general election call, this would only be effective where the general election is initiated within the actual writ period for the by-election.

(15:00)

Mr. Speaker, the original intent of this provision introduced in 1991 was to avoid a circumstance where a constituency could remain unrepresented for an extended period due to the reluctance of the government of the day to call a by-election in a particular riding. An amendment to limit the application of this provision to the first 36 months after a general election would respect this original purpose while avoiding the unnecessary expense of having to call a by-election relatively shortly before conducting a general election.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also provides for amendments that will specifically add five new positions that have been identified by the Board of Internal Economy to the list under section 11 of

the Assembly-related appointments for which a member may receive additional allowances. These changes are intended to recognize the increased duties and responsibilities under the new committee system for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Deputy Opposition House Leader, Government House Leader, Deputy Government House Leader, and a third party House Leader.

An amendment to create a new section 60.4 would specifically reference four of the five new positions and authorize the board to determine a sessional allowance for these positions. Subsections (2) and (3) of the new section 60.4 provides similar authority to the Board of Internal Economy to set a salary on an annual basis for a Legislative Secretary and for the Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill also provides authority to the Board of Internal Economy to vary the level of allowances set by directive under section 67.1, during the period after the adoption of a report by a previous review committee, but before the appointment of a new review committee.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, consequential amendments will also be made to The Government Organization Act reflecting these changes regarding legislative secretaries. All of the changes relating to the new allowances will be made retroactive in effect to January 1, 2004 so that they will apply to the current session of this Legislative Assembly as requested by the Board of Internal Economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to move second reading of an Act to amend The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Act.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 61, The Legislative Assembly and Executive Council Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question? I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well it's a pleasure to rise today on Bill No. 61 which deals with the legislative council and Executive Council Act. In large part, Mr. Speaker, we agree with this particular Bill. It came before the Board of Internal Economy for discussion and members, both of the government and the opposition, were present and agreed to the changes that were being made.

The one issue though, Mr. Speaker, that was not before the Board of Internal Economy was a new section 40.3 of this Act which changes the rules dealing with by-elections, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, the government minister introducing this Bill made a comment about the situation in place prior to 1991 and the reason why a change was brought in to the Executive Council Act to ensure that by-elections were carried out in a proper time, in a proper manner, Mr. Speaker, to provide for democracy to have a role, to ensure that every constituency in Saskatchewan was properly represented in this Assembly as legislation was passed, as the issues of the province were debated and discussed.

In fact it was Bob Mitchell, who was minister of Justice at the time in 1991, who introduced this legislation and talked about the reasons why this change needed to be made to ensure that

by-elections were held in a timely manner so that there wouldn't be long and extended periods of time in which a seat would be vacant.

He talked about the Kindersley constituency which was without an elected member for 22 months. He talked about the Indian Head-Wolseley constituency which was without a representative for 21 months. He talked about the Turtleford constituency which was without a representative for 16 months, and he talked about the Souris-Cannington constituency, the constituency that I currently represent, Mr. Speaker, which was without a member for 15 months.

And I know that the members opposite are very pleased that I was elected at that next general election, especially the member from Moose Jaw North, Mr. Speaker, because he and I have enjoyed each other's company in this House, Mr. Speaker, just as the member from Moose Jaw South and I have enjoyed the debate in the House as well since her arrival here, Mr. Speaker.

And there are a good number of other members in the House that we have had the opportunity in this House to get to know each other, to exchange ideas, Mr. Speaker. And while we are all here for the benefit of Saskatchewan, we do have different ideas on how to achieve that, Mr. Speaker. And it's that need, to be able to express the democracy, the ideas of Saskatchewan from all points of view, is the reason why there is a need, Mr. Speaker, to have representation in this House. Under the proposal that the minister is bringing forward we would . . . could have exactly the same circumstances all over again, because every one of those ridings that I read off — Kindersley, Indian Head, Wolseley, Turtleford, and Souris Cannington — all became vacant after the 36-month time period, Mr. Speaker.

So this Bill would allow for exactly what the minister and what the Premier were criticizing at that time. They were saying how undemocratic it was, how unfair, how cowardly it was of the government not to call those by-elections and now they're changing the rules, Mr. Speaker, to do exactly that, to allow that same circumstance to be repeated, Mr. Speaker.

So if it was wrong, if it was wrong, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 that the previous administration had not called a by-election, then what makes it right today that the Premier should have the power to not call by-elections after 36 months into a term of election? That is exactly what the minister opposite and all of his colleagues and the Premier was talking about when this legislation was introduced in 1991 and yet now they're doing the same thing, Mr. Speaker . . . (inaudible interjection) . . . Yes, the minister comments, both ways. That's exactly what the government wants, Mr. Speaker. They want to be able to criticize the previous administration and they want to be able to do the same thing as what the government was doing at that time.

I'd like to quote, Mr. Speaker, from the Premier of today, but something he said in 1989. When a political . . . And I quote:

When a political party goes to the people before an election and says one thing, and then having won the election, after the election turns and does just the opposite, Mr. Speaker, that makes a sham of parliamentary democracy.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. D'Autremont: — That is what that Premier, the current Premier said in 1989 and he's doing the exact opposite today in 2004.

Mr. Speaker, the current Premier made some comments not so long ago as 1989, but he made comments on July 10, 2002. And he said in response to a question that I asked him in Committee of the Whole, Mr. Speaker:

Mr. Chair, I appreciate the observation made by the member from Cannington that it was in fact our government that put in place the legislation to ensure timely by-elections.

He appreciated that fact that he was part of the government that brought in a Bill dealing with timely by-elections so I again, I quote, "So I appreciate his observation that we have put this right by putting it into legislation."

We have put this right, and now he is trying to change it again, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this cannot be allowed to happen. Mr. Speaker, at this time, I move that we adjourn debate.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Cannington that second reading debate on Bill No. 61 be now adjourned. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNED DEBATES

SECOND READINGS

Bill No. 36

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen that **Bill No. 36 — The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, it's a privilege to take part in today's debate on this Bill regarding the provincial sales tax.

Mr. Speaker, as my colleagues have pointed out in the legislature many times in the past, the promises that were made in the election campaign of the New Democratic Party — and I have a copy of their platform in my hands — and on at least four different pages in the platform, there is no mention of a tax increase, a specific increase to the provincial sales tax.

And in fact, it always refers to a tax cut. I quote from page 6. It

says: “. . . continue to provide sustainable provincial tax cuts.” That’s the quotation directly from the New Democratic Party platform of the November election, Mr. Speaker. So, Mr. Speaker, there’s no question that the current government has reneged on its promise of tax cuts. They did not indicate anywhere in this document that they were considering increasing the PST (provincial sales tax) if, in fact, the desire was there.

And in fact, the minister indicated that during the election campaign, it would not be effective for a party to talk about tax cuts because you might not, you know, entice voters. Well, Mr. Speaker, then that is exactly what they did. They would not talk about tax cuts . . . tax increases, I’m sorry. They talked about tax cuts. They didn’t deliver.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have — in various examples in this platform — the decision by the NDP to say we will support tax cuts. And in the end, we have a Bill that has been introduced to this Legislative Assembly that says we will increase the provincial sales tax from 6 to 8 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, there have been continued points being raised by the Premier after that November election that reinforced that position that there be no tax cuts, in fact very specific that the provincial sales tax was not something that would be considered. And I quote from the Premier, a radio interview of January 8, 2004, when the reporter asked the following question, and I quote, “Do you have a mandate to change or raise the PST?” And the premier responded, “No, no.”

Mr. Speaker, that was on January 8, very clear that from the November platform where there was talks of tax cuts, no talk of a tax increase. On January 8, assuming that consultation was going on with various groups in preparing the budget estimates, the Premier emphasized — or should I say re-emphasized? — that the provincial sales tax increase was just not on. The Premier did not have a mandate to talk about a PST increase and in fact to go ahead with it.

So, Mr. Speaker, what we see in the estimates and what we see in the actual NDP document are very much different. Nowhere in this document did I see reference to cutting of hospitals and the closing of hospitals. In the health care plan of the NDP, they did not talk about closure of hospitals. Mr. Speaker, they also did not talk about closure of long-term care beds, and we just saw the announcement from the Minister of Health that affects numerous communities where the long-term care beds are being cut — are being cut, Mr. Speaker. So that was not in their document.

Another thing that wasn’t in their document was the closure of 22 rural service centres. Mr. Speaker, 22 communities were drastically affected by this government’s plan to restructure delivery of services in the agriculture community. Why didn’t they talk about it in their platform? Was there something that they were afraid of? Well I would venture, Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Finance would’ve said about discussion about tax increases, you just don’t want to talk about that during an election campaign. So therefore they didn’t talk about closure of 22 rural service centres.

No, one other thing they didn’t talk about, Mr. Speaker, was the

laying off of over 500 workers from the public service sector. There’s no mention in this document about decreasing the size of the public service sector and in fact laying off 500 individuals.

Now, Mr. Speaker, after the most recent health care announcement, we’re going to see upwards of . . . the possibility after regional health authorities are done with their cuts and changes, we may see an additional 250 people laid off, Mr. Speaker. That’s over 750 people that this government is laying off, no mention at all in their party platform that this was something that they were considering. Restructuring, whatever term you want to use, Mr. Speaker, it doesn’t . . . it did not occur in this document.

(15:15)

Mr. Speaker, most emphatically this document did not talk about a PST increase. This government has no mandate to increase the PST, and as a result they have introduced Bill No. 36 that says it’s time to increase the PST from six to seven.

Mr. Speaker, we’ve heard from people, especially from the western side of the province. Strong competition exists right now between businesses on the west side of the province and businesses located in Alberta where there is no provincial sales tax. Can you imagine now, if they were having difficulty before competing with the prices on various commodities whether they be furniture or whether they be recreational vehicles or articles like that . . . if 6 per cent was causing them a problem, what will a 7 per cent increase do?

Mr. Speaker, I think this Bill will cause businesses to possibly shut down. And that’s not what this province needs. This province needs growth. And an increase in the PST is not needed.

Mr. Speaker, this was not a promise that was made by the NDP. It was something that the NDP campaigned on that said they would not do it. The Premier of this province stated on January 8 that he had no mandate to increase the provincial sales tax. And as an opposition we strongly agree with that.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that this Bill either be withdrawn by the minister or be defeated. Thank you very much.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the one motion moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — Those in favour of the motion say aye.

Some Hon. Members: — Aye.

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion say no.

Some Hon. Members: — No.

The Speaker: — I believe the ayes have it. Call in the members for a standing vote.

The division bells rang from 15:17 until 15:24.

The Speaker: — Order. The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Those in favour of the motion, please rise.

Yeas — 29

Calvert	Addley	Lautermilch
Hagel	Van Mulligen	Serby
Atkinson	Cline	Sonntag
Crofford	Prebble	Forbes
Wartman	Belanger	Higgins
Thomson	Nilson	Beatty
Hamilton	Junor	Harper
Iwanchuk	McCall	Quennell
Trew	Yates	Taylor
Morin	Borgerson	

The Speaker: — Those opposed to the motion, please rise.

Nays — 28

Wall	Toth	Elhard
Heppner	D'Autremont	Krawetz
Draude	Hermanson	Bjornerud
Stewart	Wakefield	Morgan
McMorris	Eagles	Gantfoer
Harpauer	Bakken	Cheveldayoff
Huyghebaert	Allchurch	Brkich
Weekes	Kerpan	Merriman
Chisholm	Dearborn	Hart
Kirsch		

Clerk Assistant: — Mr. Speaker, those in favour, 29; those opposed, 28.

The Speaker: — I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker: — Order, please.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred?

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — The Minister of Finance has moved that Bill

No. 36, The Provincial Sales Tax Amendment Act be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Bill read a second time and ordered to be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy at the next sitting.

Bill No. 1

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

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

Mr. Merriman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak on The Financial Administration Act.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition agrees with the overall intent of this legislation. We've agreed with the Provincial Auditor for many years that a move to summary financial statements, both in the budget estimates and the Public Accounts is a move that must be made in order to give the people of Saskatchewan a clear and unfiltered view of the state of their province's finances.

With 40 per cent of the government's financial activity outside of the General Revenue Fund, simply focusing on financial reporting on this one part of government allows the government to skew the statement of our finances. And the NDP has certainly done that over the years, especially with the current Premier in office.

The NDP government has been governing by simply raising debt and all the while claiming balanced budgets in our province. Government's own budget documents showed the Fiscal Stabilization Fund being added to the General Revenue Fund as revenue and instantly subtracted from the bottom line as added debt. Still the NDP continues to prevent this as a cash fund.

But while we agree with the intent of the Bill, we do notice an omission that we hope the government will correct before the final passage of this legislation. The Bill states that the financial reports will be completed based on the policies set down by the Treasury Board. And that's it, Mr. Speaker. It does not say what these policies are. It's wide open for interpretation or manipulation.

To give the people of Saskatchewan a full measure of comfort, that the intention of the Provincial Auditor is followed with these reporting methods, we believe it is imperative that the Bill is explicit and that the policies used in preparing these books follow what is known as the generally accepted accounting principles. That is a very well-known technical term that is a term used by the Provincial Auditor.

To make sure, Mr. Speaker, that there's no misunderstanding about the intent of these changes, we believe this must be put into the legislation. We would hope that the government would see fit to agree with this change in an otherwise positive piece of a legislation and we will discuss this extremely . . . extensively more in committee. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

(15:30)

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Finance, that Bill No. 1, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee should this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 1, The Financial Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Finance that Bill No. 1 be referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried. The Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on the Economy.

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

Bill No. 7

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

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

Mr. Brkich: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to get up to make a few comments on the automobile insurance amendment Act, 2004.

It seems like any Bill that deals with SGI (Saskatchewan Government Insurance) is quite lengthy and there is quite a few amendments on this, being proposed in this particular Act. I know that we've sent the Bill with explanatory notes to quite a few lobby groups, because it does go quite across a diverse group of people and we're still waiting on some opinions, and

some concerns are being brought forward on this particular Bill.

I know that one of the — shouldn't say problems — but I know one of the concerns out there, it's been brought to my office, is still with the SGI offices out there. People will come in — and everybody knows everybody out in rural Saskatchewan, you know — and they keep asking the person, should I be in no-fault, should be in tort, what should I be in.

And I know that they're not supposed to and they know they're not supposed to give any advice at all. But I mean, when you're sitting across . . . Like, a guy has told me, he says, when you know the guy, sometimes he's related to you or whatever, you know, and it's hard not to give advice. So they feel kind of in a spot that they're not supposed to even mention tort or no-fault.

And I know, even after they did their licensing, maybe six months later they'll come back, gee I didn't even know; I've just read this in the paper that they've kind of introduced this kind of tort system; how come you didn't mention it to me and that. And he says, well I'm not supposed to really give any opinions on either or to even advise them that both of them are optional. So it's a little difficult on that particular end there.

I know another part of this Bill deals with a \$5,000 deductible, and I'm not quite sure why that's being reduced. I've been trying to talk to some people and find out what this particular . . . deals with there, with this 5,000 deductible.

There's also another section that deals with changes to insurance coverage in terms of, what the Bill deals with, off-road accidents. And same thing; I'm kind of concerned about that. Is that vehicles that aren't normally licensed? Does that count as off-road accidents or is it service trucks, is it . . .

You know, there's some more information we're trying to find out on that particular . . . how that affects people's Ski-Doos, stuff like that on that similar piece. We're waiting for some information back on that.

There's also a section dealing with hit and run, that I think there's something to do with Crowns, government buildings, municipalities who do not contribute to the SGI Auto Fund for damage caused by hit and run and uninsured driver. Certain things there that I'd like some questions; we're still waiting for some information back on that.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I would like to adjourn debate on this particular Bill till we receive some more information to some of these questions that we have out there.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the member for Arm River-Watrous that second reading debate on Bill No. 7 be now adjourned.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Bill No. 29

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Ms. Atkinson that **Bill No. 29 — The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — I recognize the member for Cannington.

Mr. D'Autremont: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, Mr. Speaker, this is a Bill dealing with the use of snowmobiles and snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan which is a very important recreational pastime for Saskatchewan people and for tourists visiting Saskatchewan, Mr. Speaker.

It's also one that, over the past number of years, has encountered some difficulties when it comes to accidents with snowmobiles, some of which have occurred on the trail system — a good number of which have occurred off of the trail system, Mr. Speaker — but this deals with the use of the snowmobile trails.

Mr. Speaker, there seems to be, though, a bone of contention on this particular Act. There has been letters of complaint about the Act written by the Snowmobile Association. There have been letters of a complimentary nature about this particular Bill written by the Snowmobile Association and there are . . . we've also received some letters from individual clubs that have a concern about this legislation. So it seems to be all over the map when it comes to either agreement or disagreement with this particular Act, and so it needs to be . . . a look taken into the Act to see just what this is going to mean for the use of snowmobiles, for the use of the snowmobile trails.

Just to give an example, Mr. Speaker, so that the public can understand a little bit about the concerns that are being raised and — both on the positive and on the negative side about this issue, Mr. Speaker — I'd like to read into the record a couple of the letters that we have received.

The first one is addressed to all Saskatchewan MLAs (Member of the Legislative Assembly) and is written by the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association on May 5. It says, and I quote:

I would like to inform you that the snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan will not be available to the people of Saskatchewan this . . . (upcoming) winter. This has an effect on each and every provincial riding in Saskatchewan. Please take the time to understand how we have come to this situation.

The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association (SSA) lobbied the NDP Government to pass legislation to make it mandatory that snowmobiles being operated on a designated snowmobile trail must have . . . snowmobile trail permit. In the fall of 1999 this legislation was put into place and the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Trail Fund (SSTF) was created. The minister in charge of SGI appointed the SSA as the SSTF Manager. The SSA proceeded to produce all the materials needed to put the trail permits into place. The snowmobile club signed on and (the) trail permits were made available to the public.

Midway through the FIRST year (February 2000) the SSTF manager was contacted by the RCMP and told . . . there . . . (was) a problem with gazettement of the trails. The SSA contacted SGI and was told that the trails and maps must be gazetted. The RCMP then told the SSA that they would not be able to enforce for the remainder of the snowmobile season. Going into the 2000-2001 season the SSA met with the RCMP and were told that the RCMP would only give warnings to snowmobilers that used . . . (a trail) without a trail permit. In the 2001-2002 season the RCMP informed the SSA that there still remained a problem with gazettement of the trails. The SSA contacted SGI and was informed that there is no problem with the legislation. Going into 2002-2003 season the SSA was of the understanding that things were fine and enforcement would improve, trail permit sales would increase and our province would have SAFE snowmobile trails. The SSA continued on with trail permits as usual. This past season 2003-2004, the SSA forged ahead, midway through the season the SSA received a call from a member club who informed us that the RCMP is informing the public by telephone that there is a loophole in the snowmobile legislation that the RCMP cannot enforce the trail permit. The SSA contacted the RCMP and asked what was going on . . . what this loophole was all about. This information was provided to the SSA. The SSA contacted SGI and the process began to amend the Snowmobile Act to close this loophole. The amendment to the Snowmobile Act is in the process at this time.

Throughout this entire process the SSA was informed by SGI that there was no problem. The SSA has invested thousands of dollars to inform the public that a trail permit is required. Over the past five (5) snowmobile seasons trail permit sales (have) decreased. Over the past five (5) years the insurance to operate the trails has risen from \$17,000 to \$145,000. In 2001 the NDP Government hired a consulting firm to undertake a study of snowmobiling in Saskatchewan. In the study recommendations were made to the province and the SSA. To date the SSA has implemented each and every one of the recommendations and the province has not.

The SSA has informed the Minister in Charge of SGI that due to mismanagement of the legislation and no enforcement of trail permits the SSTF is without the funds to carry the required insurance. Without the insurance the trails cannot exist. Without the insurance the clubs cannot operate, fundraise or provide SAFE trails.

Without snowmobile trails, statistics show an increase in FATALITIES and INJURIES. With this happening our province will see an INCREASE to HEALTH CARE COSTS. With this happening our province will see a Tourism Industry gone. Our province will see jobs lost, businesses closing their doors and a REDUCTION to the PST collected.

The SSA has informed the Minister that there are insufficient funds to purchase the required insurance. The Minister's response is “. . . (the) government has done its part”. They have done their part in closing the door on PUBLIC SAFETY. They have done their part in closing

the door on TOURISM. They have done their part in closing the door on SASKATCHEWAN.

The SSA asked the minister to put together a group from agencies involved to find a solution to this problem; The SSA RECEIVED NO ANSWER.

The SSA asked for a change to the way the trail fee is collected, the SSA was told NO WAY, WE HAVE DONE OUR PART.

The SSA is now in a position where the public is informed . . . the snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan will no longer exist. SGI must be held accountable for their actions; their actions have cost this province the LOSS of PUBLIC SAFETY, A TOURISM INDUSTRY and THE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE. The SSA is stuck in a situation where we have no control over the SSTF (that's the snowmobile trust fund). The SSA has had to rely on SGI for the legislation for trail permits.

For the sake of PUBLIC SAFETY, to reduce fatalities and injuries help the Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association in SAVING the snowmobile industry in Saskatchewan. Please bring this to the attention of the Minister in Charge of SGI, (the) Honorable Maynard Sonntag, Room 38, Legislative Building, Regina . . .

Mr. Speaker, the letter then goes on to point out some facts about snowmobiling in Saskatchewan.

SASKATCHEWAN SNOWMOBILE FACTS:

- 40,000 snowmobiles
- 35,000 recreational snowmobilers
- 15, 585 registered snowmobiles . . .

So you can see from that, Mr. Speaker, there's a significant difference between the number of snowmobiles and the number of registered; roughly one-third of the machines are registered and "5,400 trail-permitted snowmobiles . . ."

So you have about one-eighth of the snowmobiles are actually permitted to use the trails, and:

- 0 charges laid for trail permits — RCMP (1999-2004)
- \$145,000 insurance costs for trails
- 10,000 kms of snowmobile trails
- snowmobile trails increase the safety factor by 66%
- Saskatchewan's #1 winter Tourism industry's — snowmobiling . . .

I do wonder though, Mr. Speaker, whether or not the hockey people agree with that statistics, or curling, or curling. The OWLS (order of wily legislative sexagenarians) know all about curling.

And, Mr. Speaker, "\$22,000,000 annual industry (and) 1200 jobs province wide."

The letter goes on to say:

The . . . (SSTA) has made considerable financial

contributions to inform the public of trails, trail fees and public safety. This was done to make (sure) the SSTF and . . . (maintained) snowmobile trails in Saskatchewan. SGI FAILED TO INSURE THAT THE LEGISLATION WAS DONE PROPERLY. The time has come that SGI take responsibilities for their . . . (action). The time has come for SGI to reimburse the . . . (SSTA) for monies lost due to the incompetence. The fact . . . (that) SGI made the mistake, (and) led the . . . (SSTA) to believe the legislation was correct, the SSA invested thousands of dollars. With the amendment to the Snowmobile Act (2003 spring legislature) is the proof that SGI failed to provide the correct legislation. With SGI failing to provide . . . proper legislation in 1999 the RCMP could not enforce the trail permits and this has left the SSTF without the funds to provide Safe Trails. SGI must take responsibility for their actions and provide funding . . . (to the) snowmobile trails until the STTF can operate in a self sustaining manner. Chris Brewer, CEO, Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association.

And that letter was from May 6, Mr. Speaker.

(15:45)

Between that time and a couple of weeks, there was obviously a meeting held between the government, SGI, the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) because a subsequent letter was sent to the minister in charge of SGI on this very issue. And I quote. This is May 17, 2004, Mr. Speaker. I quote:

The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association(SSA) held an emergency meeting of the SSA Board Members and Saskatchewan Snowmobile Trail Fund Representatives on Saturday, May 15, 2004 at the SSA . . . (board) located at Regina Beach.

We'd like to start off by thanking you (and this letter is addressed to the minister) and your staff for addressing and making the changes to the Snowmobile Act. The RCMP has stated that the changes were required and now we will see if they will enforce the trail permit legislation. Our staff misdirected comments towards you and your staff based on information we received. Our staff has done research and spent time talking with officials at SGI. The information we have received from your staff at SGI is information that puts a different light on this situation. Had the RCMP charged an individual under the Snowmobile Act for not having a Trail Permit on a designated snowmobile trail, we . . . (were) told this would have held up in the Courts. For five years the RCMP have dodged the enforcement of the law dealing with the trail permit portion of the Snowmobile Act. We hope that the future brings the RCMP to the trails and we see enforcement of the Trail Permit.

The SSA understands that you and your staff at SGI are not the cause of the problems that the SSA (is having) . . . are having but who are we to turn to? We are a small organization with two very large corporations that the SSA relies on, (SGI and (the) RCMP). When the system fails, where should we go? Our overall objective is to continue (the management) . . . to manage the Snowmobile Trail

Fund and to provide the dollars (for) . . . to maintain safe snowmobile trails. The SSA Board is looking at ways to continue the operation of the Trail Fund. We are finding it very difficult as, without the RCMP's support for the past five years this has left the Trail Fund short of funds required to purchase the insurance. We are looking at ways of finding the funds and hope to keep the trails open. It would be greatly appreciated if you and your staff could offer any assistance with the funding problem. (And) We ask that you support our proposal that you received from Mr. Chris Brewer, CEO dated May 11, 2004. Our funding problem is one that could be short lived. As we see enforcement of the Trail Permit we will see compliance that snowmobilers will support the Trail Fund and purchase a trail permit. Over time we will see snowmobilers getting into the habit of purchasing a trail permit. Our objective is to work with you and your staff to find a solution to the insurance problem.

We are sorry . . . (that) any misrepresentation that has occurred and hope that you accept our apology. We would like to meet with you prior to May 27, 2004 to discuss the insurance issue. We may have some insight to a solution to funding problems and we need to discuss this with you. Would you please have your office contact the SSA to arrange a date . . . (for a meeting)?

And this is signed on behalf of the SSA Board of Directors by a Mr. Barry Bradshaw, president of the SSA.

Now, Mr. Speaker, so you can see that the SSA has had a number of problems dealing with this particular piece of legislation as it was originally implemented in 1999. It has meant that their trail funds have been severely depleted, that they can no longer afford to purchase the insurance necessary, and that they still need support from the government in the form of changes to the legislation to ensure that this takes place.

So, Mr. Speaker, it's hopeful that this piece of legislation will deal in some part with the ongoing difficulties. However, it seems to be it's also a problem between a misunderstanding or problems at the SSA, some misunderstandings of how the legislation should work and with SGI and the role of the RCMP in dealing with the trail permits.

It's also a bit of a problem, Mr. Speaker, between snowmobilers in southern Saskatchewan who operate mainly on private land, where the trails may run at the odd time alongside of a highway or they may cross the highways, but in large part they operate on privately held lands. They may go through a provincial park or over some Crown land but in large part it's private land.

In comparison to that though, Mr. Speaker, in the North it's running mainly on Crown land and only rarely does it cross over on private land. On private land there is really no need for a trail permit, providing you're not riding on the trail. But the trail, even then it's only I believe, really enforceable when it's on Crown land that it comes into effect, Mr. Speaker. So in the North, that means all basically of the trails are on Crown land, therefore it's . . . if you drive, if you run on Crown land then you're going to run into conflict or potential conflict with this piece of legislation.

So we have a letter expressing some concern on that issue from the La Ronge Snowmobile Club, Mr. Speaker, and this letter was directed to the Premier, and I'd like to quote:

Recently I received an information package, from MLA . . . Denis Allchurch, pertaining to proposed amendments to The Snowmobile Act. Please find attached my reply to Mr. Allchurch.

As you will no doubt notice, I have one major concern with the proposed amendment to The Snowmobile Act. That concern is that the people of Northern Saskatchewan are being forgotten. The La Ronge Snowmobile Club in our endeavours to bring responsible recreational snowmobiling into Northern Saskatchewan, along with all (of) its economic benefits, has always been respectful of the peoples of Northern Saskatchewan, be they Aboriginal, Metis or others. Our club has always recognized that the snowmobile is more than a recreational toy to northern people. It is a main means of transportation. That is why we have always recognized that residents of the Northern Administrative District (N.A.D.), not just a few licensed trappers and commercial fishermen, should have free access to any La Ronge Snowmobile Club or Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association designated trails within the N.A.D. if and when they come to be. This free access to designated trails within the N.A.D. is basically the same privilege which is allowed private property owners in Southern Saskatchewan.

Unfortunately, the present wording in the proposal will take this away from us.

Therefore we request that the proposed amendment be further amended, by adding to Section 20.3 at the appropriate location a clause that may read like (and I quote for their amendment purposes):

All persons with residence in the Northern Administrative District (N.A.D.) of Northern Saskatchewan are exempt from the requirement to possess a trail permit in order to use SSA designated trails within, and only within, the N.A.D."

Quote, carrying on from the letter, Mr. Speaker:

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me . . . Yours truly, Mr. Marshall B. Leswick, President (Mr. Speaker).

So you see, people in northern Saskatchewan do have a concern that in comparison to those in southern Saskatchewan, which mainly use the trails as a recreational tool, whereas in northern Saskatchewan it's used more for transportation from point A to point B, either for personal reasons or business reasons, whatever the case may be.

So there is a need to have some sort of recognition, Mr. Speaker, in the legislation, that provides for the different uses of snowmobiles in Saskatchewan. And the legislation at the present time doesn't seem to recognize that.

We have a concern over the funding arrangements, Mr.

Speaker, on how this is going to work to ensure that the trails continue to be in place, because they do provide a safer environment for people to utilize their snowmobiles. But we are also concerned about how this legislation is going to impact northern Saskatchewan and the people who utilize their snowmobiles both for recreation and for business and personal reasons of transportation, Mr. Speaker.

These are questions that need to be directed to the minister. These are questions that we hope that the minister has been taking into consideration, that he will be prepared to respond to the concerns that were originally raised by the SSA in their letter, which was not very complimentary to SGI, to the minister's department, and to the RCMP, Mr. Speaker.

So we will ask questions on those issues to see how they have been dealt with. The Saskatchewan Snowmobile Association feels that there has been some resolution to some of those matters. So we'll be looking to see what resolution the government has provided on those very issues, Mr. Speaker, to how they have settled those issues with the Snowmobile Association or, if they're not settled, how they propose to deal with those particular issues. Because the Snowmobile Association, obviously from their second letter, has different concerns now. They're concerned now about how the funding will take place for their insurance, and whether or not the RCMP will actually carry out the enforcement of the Act on the snowmobile trails.

We'll also be needing to ask the minister how he intends to deal with the concerns raised by the northern snowmobile riders from the La Ronge Snowmobile Club on the issue of the differences between the use in northern Saskatchewan on all basically Crown land versus in southern Saskatchewan, mainly on private property, and how this kind of a regional conflict can be altered and dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

Therefore to give the minister the opportunity to address these issues now that he's heard the concerns on the floor of the legislature that have been raised, we would agree, Mr. Speaker, to allow this Bill to proceed to committee.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the minister for the Crown Management Board that Bill No. 29, The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Taylor: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill

29, The Snowmobile Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister for Government Relations that Bill No. 29 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — The motion is carried.

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

Bill No. 35

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

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

Mr. Krawetz: — Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to make a few comments on Bill No. 35 and I'll be brief, and then we can move on to other business of estimates.

Mr. Speaker, Bill No. 35, as indicated by the minister that put forward this Bill, was necessary to clarify, to clarify spending of the Crown corporations on the Wide Open Future campaign.

Mr. Speaker, there is some uncertainty as to what the words clarify meant. And, Mr. Speaker, in this Assembly the minister was asked to provide a legal opinion that she said had been obtained by CIC (Crown Investments Corporation of Saskatchewan) regarding whether or not the CIC had actual authority to spend the money on the Wide Open Futures campaign. She stated that she had that legal opinion, and we asked for that legal opinion to be presented to this Legislative Assembly. And she said she would not do that.

Mr. Speaker, there has to be a reason why that legal opinion first of all was obtained, and secondly whether or not it in fact clarified that there was the legal authority for Crown Investments to be able to finance the advertising for the Wide Open Futures campaign. So that needs to be clarified, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my colleagues have made reference a number of times to the concerns of this Bill that highlight some things that are quite positive. And that's of course providing for increased education of workers to ensure that skills are met for the workforce that will need them. Our concern, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of so many private businesses in the province, is that this limits it to the Crown corporations, as indicated by the minister, that they be the only choice for employees.

And that's not what I think we need in this province. That's not what is a partnership of private-public businesses. What we need is to have a broad approach. We need to be able to see the big picture.

And I think this Act limits what benefits will be provided for students. We need to have students with opportunities to pursue private businesses. And it's not just the Crowns that will have a large number of people retiring over the next few years. We know that the province of Saskatchewan, as we move forward over the next few years, will be affected by the baby boom and the retirement of many people from that baby-boom era. And there will be shortage of employees in private businesses, in Crown corporations, in government departments.

So we need to be able to provide an education program for not only youth of both and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal descent. We need to be able to provide a broad picture, a broad approach so that employees who know that there will be opportunities in Crown corporations, in private businesses, in government departments will have that ability to obtain jobs.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think that this Bill has looked at a very narrow focus, and it needs to be looked at much broader. Mr. Speaker, as I indicated the problem with this Bill is that we believe that the government did not have the authority through CIC to spend money in the Wide Open Futures campaign.

Mr. Speaker, we also have been made aware by the Provincial Auditor's office, by a memo dated May 27, 2004, that on Thursday, June 3, the Provincial Auditor will submit the 2004 Report Volume 1 to the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, that report, we understand, may clarify some of the concerns that we have raised around government expenditures through the CIC Board. It will probably make comment on various components that we have raised in this Legislative Assembly.

(16:00)

So, Mr. Speaker, being that today is May 31 and we have a couple of days before the Provincial Auditor's report will be received, it will enable us as an official opposition to take a good hard look at the chapter that I'm sure that the auditor will make comments about — about spending and about government's control. And before that, Mr. Speaker, we do not want this Bill to move forward, so I would move that we adjourn debate.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Debate adjourned.

Deputy Clerk: — Government orders. Adjourned debates, item no. 7, resume debate on the second reading motion for Bill No. 48, The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004. Mr. Brkich.

The Speaker: — I recognize the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — With leave, I wonder if we might stand consideration of Bill 48 until we deal with Bills 51 and

52.

The Speaker: — Is there agreement to go to Bills 51 and 52?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

Bill No. 51

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 51 — The Limitations Act** be now read a second time.

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

Mr. Morgan: — Mr. Speaker, we've had the opportunity to look at this Bill, and we're not going to oppose the Bill going forward at this point in time.

We have had considerable discussions with people that are affected by this Bill, and the concern that we've had expressed is the changes to what would be the limits on ultimate liability. Right now it seems to be an infinity plus six years. And with the changes to this legislation and the companion Bill that goes with it, Mr. Speaker, there could have some significant ramifications for buildings and products that have latent defects that don't manifest themselves until after the ultimate limitation period has expired. It's something we will discuss more at a committee level, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 51, The Limitations Act be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the minister . . . the Government House Leader.

Hon. Mr. Van Mulligen: — Mr. Speaker, I move that Bill No. 51, The Limitations Act be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Government House Leader that Bill No. 51 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services at the next sitting.

Bill No. 52

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Quennell that **Bill No. 52 — The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004/Loi de 2004 sur les modifications corrélatives découlant de la loi intitulée The Limitations Act** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 52, The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is the Assembly ready for the question?

Some Hon. Members: — Question.

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

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

The Speaker: — To which committee shall this Bill be referred? I recognize the Minister of Justice.

Hon. Mr. Quennell: — I move that Bill No. 52, The Limitations Consequential Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the Minister of Justice that Bill No. 52 be referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt that motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Committee on Human Services.

Motion agreed to, the Bill read a second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Human Services at the next sitting.

Bill No. 48

The Assembly resumed the adjourned debate on the proposed motion by the Hon. Mr. Sonntag that **Bill No. 48 — The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004** be now read a second time.

The Speaker: — The question before the Assembly is the motion moved by the minister for SGI that Bill No. 48, The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be now read a second time. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried.

Deputy Clerk: — Second reading of this Bill.

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that Bill No. 48, The Vehicle Administration Amendment Act, 2004 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

The Speaker: — It has been moved by the minister for SGI that Bill No. 48 be referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies. Is it the pleasure of the Assembly to adopt the motion?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Speaker: — Motion is carried. This Bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Crown and Central Agencies.

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

Deputy Clerk: — Committee of Finance.

The Speaker: — I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into Committee of Finance.

COMMITTEE OF FINANCE

General Revenue Fund Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization Vote 1

Subvote (AG01)

The Chair: — Order. Committee of Finance. The first item before the committee are the consideration of estimates for the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, vote 1 found on page 29 of the Estimates book. And I would recognize the minister to introduce his officials.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. I would like to introduce the deputy minister for Agriculture and Food, Doug Matthies, who is on my immediate left. To my right is the assistant deputy minister, Louise Greenberg. Immediately behind me is assistant deputy minister Maryellen Carlson.

And right behind Doug Matthies is Rick Burton, director of the policy branch. And immediately behind Rick is Laurier Donais, senior manager of financial systems, corporate services branch.

And in the back row, starting on the far side, is Stan Benjamin, acting general manager for Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation. Next to him is Kari Harvey, the manager for business services, agri-business development branch. And next to Kari is Greg Hasse, director of the lands branch, and then David Boehm, director of financial programs branch. And on this end, Ross Johnson, manager of operational services, corporate services branch.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you, Mr. Minister, for introducing your officials. And I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the department officials to the Assembly today and we appreciate the assistance that you always give us when you're here. And with that I'll turn the beginning of the questioning over to my colleague from Humboldt.

The Chair: — I recognize the member for Humboldt.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. I have a question related to crop insurance. And on January 27, 2004 the federal government had a news release entitled, "Minister Speller Announces Tax Provisions for Farmers". It announced that 2003 income tax deferral option that they offered to producers of livestock because of the drought. In the news release they stated, and I quote:

The drought-related tax deferral was made after reviewing soil moisture, precipitation levels and forage yield for the 2003 growing season, and provides a management option to owners of breeding livestock who were forced to sell all or part of their herd due to drought conditions affecting feed or water supplies.

Included with the news release, Mr. Chair, was a list of the rural municipalities that were designated as significant drought areas. And on that list was the RM (rural municipality) of Prince Albert No. 461 and the RM of Shellbrook No. 493. These RMs, although deemed to be significant drought areas by the criteria of the federal government, I have been told that they did not qualify for the rainfall insurance for their pasture land through their crop insurance.

Can the minister explain the discrepancy of why the federal government deemed them to be a significant drought area but the provincial government did not?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Under the provincial program it basically covers rainfall in the April, May, June, July period, up to July 31. And the first three months are weighted at about 30 per cent, and the last at 10.

And we did, in terms of sharing of information, this information was shared with the federal government as they designed their program and determined what they would categorize as a drought area as well. But because of the parameters that we set for our program, it's different from what . . . the criteria that the federal government was using.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, from the minister's answer can I deduct that the federal government was more lenient in their program than the provincial government?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — In our program we're insuring against variation on the historical averages, and we're trying to make sure that with the end date of July 31 that, for those producers who are needing to purchase feed based on what they've been able to produce and generate with rainfall in their area, that they have time to be able to make arrangements for the feed

purchase.

(16:15)

The federal government program is different. It's a tax-based program and on that program they're not looking at . . . They may, in terms of their parameters they're not looking necessarily at historic averages. And so in terms of whether or not it's more lenient, all I can say to you is I guess one would make that judgment.

But from our perspective they're very different programs, designed for a different reason. And this program is an insurance to make sure if there is need for feed, it can be determined in a timely manner so that the producers will be able to purchase feed if they're short.

Ms. Harpauer: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Mr. Chair, I would like to change my questions now and return to something that we talked about the last time that Agriculture estimates were up and that is the agricultural policy framework.

I would have a couple of questions on a few of the components of the agricultural policy framework other than the risk management component. And one of those is the environment component. And again returning to the news release from the provincial government dated December 22, 2003, there was a paragraph under the category of the environment that reads, and I quote:

The Conservation Cover Program . . . will promote land stewardship through soil conservation, water resource protection, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and conservation of biodiversity.

The total investment that was committed to that was \$19.94 million. Now with the new budget or with this year's budget, the government is saying that they are no longer going to continue with that program even though they announced a commitment of money just four months ago. Can the minister explain what's going to happen to the committed \$19.94 million?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — In terms of the press release, I understand that is a federal government press release and referring to the overall program. It is true that we have discontinued our conservation cover program and the funding that was directly headed towards that.

But in the process of trying to make sure that we still get the matching funds from the federal government on their conservation cover side, we have brought forward a number of programs which we're in discussion with the federal government on that may in fact qualify, so that we will get the 60 per cent contribution and will have matching programs that will be accounted for in that process.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, I need to correct the minister because it definitely is a provincial government news release. And what I'm reading from is the backgrounder that came with that news release, but it came from the Legislative Building in Regina.

But at any rate, the minister is suggesting that they still want or still intend on contributing money to environmental or conservation programs, but we don't know what those programs are yet. And yet we had one that was . . . I know in the past the opposition said that it wasn't enough land per year that could be covered with conservation cover program, but it was well-received. And it's one that we already are administering.

What happened to the applications that were there and sitting on the desk waiting for approval when this program was cancelled?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Basically the program is on the fiscal year, and it was not renewed with this budget. And therefore those who had applications that were in in the time frame that was necessary for the '03 program, they were paid out. And it was not renewed for this year, so anybody that was anticipating a program will not be covered.

Ms. Harpauer: — I'm going to move to a different component of the agriculture policy framework, and that was the renewal component. And again I will read from the same press release:

Support for the Farm Family Opportunities Initiative will help farm families in Saskatchewan find new ways of improving their farm income situation through diversification or expansion, development of new skills, or the creation of a new business.

The total investment that the government had committed was \$24.19 million. That program was scrapped as well with the most recent budget, even though there was a commitment of money to the program as late as December 22, 2003.

Can the minister tell us where he's going to redirect the 24.19 million that was committed to the farm family opportunities initiative program?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Once again it's a combination of federal dollars in the report there. Our budget would be about 4.3 million annually for the FFOI (farm family opportunities initiative) and that was again simply not renewed for this year.

In terms of the matching side of that with the federal government, both existing programs and services that the department officers . . . offers, pardon me, will be used to help qualify for the federal contribution.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, could the minister please tell us what happened to the applications that were sitting on the desk waiting for approval on this program? Because I do know there was some sitting there and they were waiting for approval and then, of course, the program was discontinued.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — For those folks who were approved under the FFOI program, there was a letter mailed out, registered letter mailed out on budget day. And it gave them up until the receipt of that letter . . . any expenses that they had receipted up until that day would be eligible. They could be sent in to the department for refund and coverage under the program.

If the applications had not been approved by that day and the change in program, or the pulling of the program, then they were not eligible under the program. But they would have had

to have been approved in order to be eligible for any support under that program.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, underneath the renewal component there also was an entry of business advisory services with the dedication of \$38.47 million. Could he please tell us what the business advisory services would entail? Is this just a matter of gathering information in an office space, and then if someone contacted those offices they could access the information?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The funding that is referred to there is primarily federal funding. It is federal funding. And under the Canadian farm business advisory services there are three components. There is the business assessment and action planning, and there is specialized business planning services, and then planning and assessment for value-added enterprises. And there is also a second component of support that is provided, and that is the Canadian agricultural skills service. And those are provided within that budget framework of the federal government.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, just for a clarification, the business advisory services is fully federally funded?

(16:30)

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The money that goes to the farmers is from the federal government, but the province does provide some of the staffing in the programs.

Ms. Harpauer: — Perhaps the minister could tell us if the agriculture enterprise program, which is also listed under renewal . . . It sounds very similar in the description to the farm family opportunities initiative because it says the agriculture enterprise program will provide support for farmers and/or their spouses so they may improve the profitability of the farm and increase family income by generating new business opportunities and employment. The total investment committed is \$21.96 million. Is that totally federally funded as well?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Yes, that is a federally funded program and we're still waiting for some of the details to be rolled out on that. But it is federally funded.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, it sounds from the minister that any of the programs that the federal government committed to and will fund we're keeping, and any of the programs that the provincial government is supposed to cost share, we're tossing them out. We're scrapping them and there is absolutely no details as to what's going to replace them. Are we going to lose the federal portion of that funding because we're tossing the programs and not honouring our financial commitment to them?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think it's important to note that in relationship with the federal government on these cost-shared programs we are in fact honouring our commitment, given the parameters that we have in working with the federal government.

And in terms of the programs that we have decided not to fund, we have brought forward then some programs which are services, some which are provided by our staff, but they do

qualify as programs that will fit in terms of our cost sharing, our 40 per cent of the 60/40 split. And so with the existing programs that we have that we brought forward for qualification, though it is not new money, we are covering off our 40 per cent. And I think it is also important to note that in the first year where we did have those other programs, that the funding that was expended by the provincial government there also counts in terms of our 40 per cent of the funding.

So in fact we do, we will be honouring our agreements with the federal government in terms of providing corresponding programs or services that will account for our 40 per cent.

Ms. Harpauer: — It's interesting, Mr. Chair. When the programs, in particular the two that I'd mentioned, the Conservation Cover Program as well as the farm family opportunities initiative, were introduced, the government was more than happy to be upfront about it. There was news releases on it describing the initiative, championing the fact that the government was doing something for farm families and rural Saskatchewan. And yet now, with whatever programs he's alluding to that they're going to go to, to, you know, fill their cost-share obligation, there's no description to those programs. There's no . . . we have no idea what they even are. So what's the secret? We've scrapped some programs that we had committed dollars to and supposedly they're being replaced with something. So what is the something and how does it help the farm families?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. I think it's very important to take a look at the broader picture in terms of our decision making. And I know the member is aware that we went approximately \$130 million over budget last year to meet programs in the agriculture sector because of the extreme need, the circumstances that we were in — both with another very difficult year in terms of crop production, and also with BSE (bovine spongiform encephalopathy). And the provincial government came on board with significant extra funding there.

And so when we were looking at the budgeting for this year, we were compelled to make some very, very difficult and challenging decisions. And in making those decisions we looked at some of the programs that were new and we looked for ways that we could — within the parameters that the federal government sets — still meet the criteria that are important to meet in order to get the full funding for the APF (agricultural policy framework). And we believe that with . . . in our discussion with the federal government, and they are in agreement with this — we find that the same thing is happening in other provinces — that we're shifting to look at some of the programs and services that we are providing as the qualifiers for the federal support.

And as far as we can see at this point in our discussions with the federal government, they are amenable to this and we think that in this way we will be able to provide the very best support possible to our producers. And we will be able to do, albeit slight, some recovery from the significant over-budget costs that we incurred last year.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, I'm curious whether or not the minister knew about the BSE and the difficulties with the economy because of the BSE and the drought on December 22,

2003. Because that is when his government basically made these promises; that these programs were going to be available through the duration of the agriculture policy framework agreement and they were going to be funded and specific amounts were committed to that funding. So on December 22, 2003, was the minister aware that there was an economic impact of BSE and the drought? Was the minister aware of the economic situation of the province?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The economic situation of the province was becoming more and more apparent. We had another significant impact on December 23, which I think the member knows about.

But as we look forward to budget planning time we begin to look at what is available in terms of resources, what is demanded in terms of need in the province, and priorities that were set in terms of health and education put significant stress on the budget and challenged us in terms of budget decision making.

And so when we came forward we wanted to make sure that we were able to maximize the programs that were there in the APF, and so when that was signed we were looking forward to a 60/40 split. We had some programs in mind that would fit within the criteria that we were expecting we would be able to use, but as we got further into the budget process we realized that there were other priorities that were putting significant demand on, and therefore we had to look for other qualifiers that would fit as we pulled back on some of the new dollar funding that we were anticipating and hoping that we would be able to put in place.

So given the broader situation and the kind of ongoing target that a budget always is with the changes in economic situation, we think that we covered off the needs as fully as we could, and that we will meet all of the expected criteria for our 40 per cent contribution, and we will get the full 60 per cent from the federal government.

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, you have to really excuse me for doubting what the minister just said that, you know, that they will meet all of the criteria when everything that they say they will do, everything that they have negotiated for, they renege.

Now my husband and I farm, and there's more variables in farming than I think than almost anything else. But you've got to be able to plan longer than one month in advance or two months in advance. You've got to be able to plan into the future when you make business decisions on your farm.

Now these decisions were made and promised to the producers of the province merely four months before the budget. To say, to use that as an excuse that, well you know we have moving targets, etc., etc., it frustrates the producers of the province. It's got to be frustrating the federal government because they negotiate with our province, they make deals with our province, and time after time after time the province is breaking those deals.

Would it be possible for the minister to provide us with a list of what programs still exist under the various components of the agriculture policy framework? Because obviously, all of the

programs that were listed on December 22 aren't worth the paper that they're written on. They were just promises they had no intentions of keeping.

Would it be possible for the minister to provide a similar document that would give us some indication of where the money's going, under what programs, what will be available, and how it will be funded?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I think . . . I mean, I catch some of the innuendo in the member's statements and I recognize that that is certainly the general negative perception that the Sask Party puts out.

But I think it very important to note that we have a long-term relationship with the federal government that has been quite solid in terms of working out arrangements and dealing with the contingencies and the challenges that our economies bring forward. And a farm economy that can change very rapidly due to weather, disease, or other elements that we have encountered over these last years certainly makes it even more challenging.

But I think, Mr. Chair, one of the most important things to note is that we do have a very good, solid, long-term relationship with the federal government both at the political level and at the level of the officials in terms of working out arrangements within the parameters that we are capable of working in. And we want to continue to foster that good relationship that we have, and we want to make sure that when programs are offered that we can provide a solid base for our producers here. That's what we've been working at, and that's what we'll continue to work at to make sure that the programs and the funding are there to give the best support possible to our producers.

(16:45)

Ms. Harpauer: — Mr. Chair, the question that I asked of the minister — and he didn't answer it — was whether or not he could supply a comprehensive breakdown of what's actually going to be in the different components of the agriculture policy framework.

With all his comments on the relationship with the federal government, he does not want me to provide an hour's worth of quotes from ministers from the federal government, comments that they've made on this wonderful relationship that they have with our provincial government. If he wants them all on record, I'd be more than happy to drag them in here and I could read them off one after one after one. But the relationship isn't as great as what he's making it sound. They are very, very frustrated with Saskatchewan.

So again, the question is: can he provide a breakdown of what programs are going to be under the different components of the agriculture policy framework and what money will be committed to each. And in addition, would he also provide how much of that funding will be provincial and how much will be federal. Thank you.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Once again I think we see the difference in perspective and perception, and it does tend to be very negative coming from the other side as usual. But I do want to say that we'd be very happy to provide all the details

once the agreements are completed. We're working on those with the federal government, and there's a very good, co-operative relationship. And as soon as we have full agreement on those items that are going to be included, they will be provided to the members opposite. And we'll be happy to have them there, and also we will provide for the public perusal.

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

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Minister, still with regard to the APF, does each component of the APF have to be signed separately?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — There is one APF agreement which is signed, one implementation agreement which we signed, and now we are in negotiation on the chapters and the components that will fit in the chapters. And we will sign an amending agreement once those components are all put together.

Mr. Stewart: — Have any amendments to the original agreement been signed at this point, Mr. Minister? Have any amendments to the original agreement been signed at this point, or are you contemplating one final agreement?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Thank you. Yes, there have been three amendments to date. There was one where interim payments under CAIS (Canadian Agriculture Income Stabilization) would be covered, but that didn't apply to us since we had not made interim payments; one under the BSE payments under CAIS which we did sign; and then the one under the business risk management around negative margins and increased caps which we did not sign but it had the requisite number of signatures and therefore it is in effect as well.

Mr. Stewart: — Yes, Mr. Minister. I understand that the program is in effect because sufficient number of provinces have signed. Will Saskatchewan producers be eligible for the federal portion of the funding, the 60 per cent that is, for the additions such as the negative margins and the increased cap?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — In the program the federal government, because this amendment is passed, the federal government will be applying negative margins and increased cap in the province of Saskatchewan.

It's important to keep in mind that we have committed \$99 million to the program and it's our anticipation that that will be fully applied over the program, and that the federal government, as I say, will be covering their portion of the program, including the negative margins which have now been agreed to.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. So just to make this perfectly clear for producers, Saskatchewan producers would be eligible for 60 per cent of the negative margin funding and as well the . . . perhaps the increased cap is a different . . . I'm not sure exactly how that plays into this.

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — The negative margins in design are to be covered up to 60 per cent by the governments, but that of course is subject to the limit that we have of 99 million. So our portion of the coverage for negative margins may well have to be pro-rated.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the section entitled, intergenerational farm transfer, under the renewal plank as well, is that federally or provincially . . . all federal funding, or is there a component of provincial funding in that particular item as well?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — Given our circumstances . . . It was a proposed program, the intergenerational farm transfer, but given our circumstances this year it was decided that we would not move it forward at this time.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Under the food safety and food quality planks of the APF, there's \$26.74 million budgeted for that. Now is that all federal funding or is there a provincial component as well?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — We anticipate putting 1.75 this year. Over the life of the program, the figures I think that the member will have before him would be in the neighbourhood of 8.75, and that is over the life of the program. That's what we'll be aiming towards.

Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Minister. Before I ask this question, I will thank you and your officials for their help today. And my last question is: when can the member from Humboldt expect the material that you've committed to give to her?

Hon. Mr. Wartman: — I will be most happy to get that information to the member, and to the member from Humboldt, just as quickly as we can get that. But as I indicated earlier, we still are working with the federal government to come to final agreements on a number of the factors there. But just as soon as we can get them to the members, we will.

And I'd like to thank the member for the questions, and thank all the officials who have been here today for your diligence and good work, and we'll look forward to doing further work in the future. Thank you.

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

Hon. Mr. Sonntag: — Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would move that the committee reports progress on agricultural estimates.

The Chair: — The minister has moved that the committee report progress on the Department of Agriculture and Food estimates. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. It now being 5 p.m., this House stand recessed until 7 p.m. this evening.

The Assembly recessed until 19:00.

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